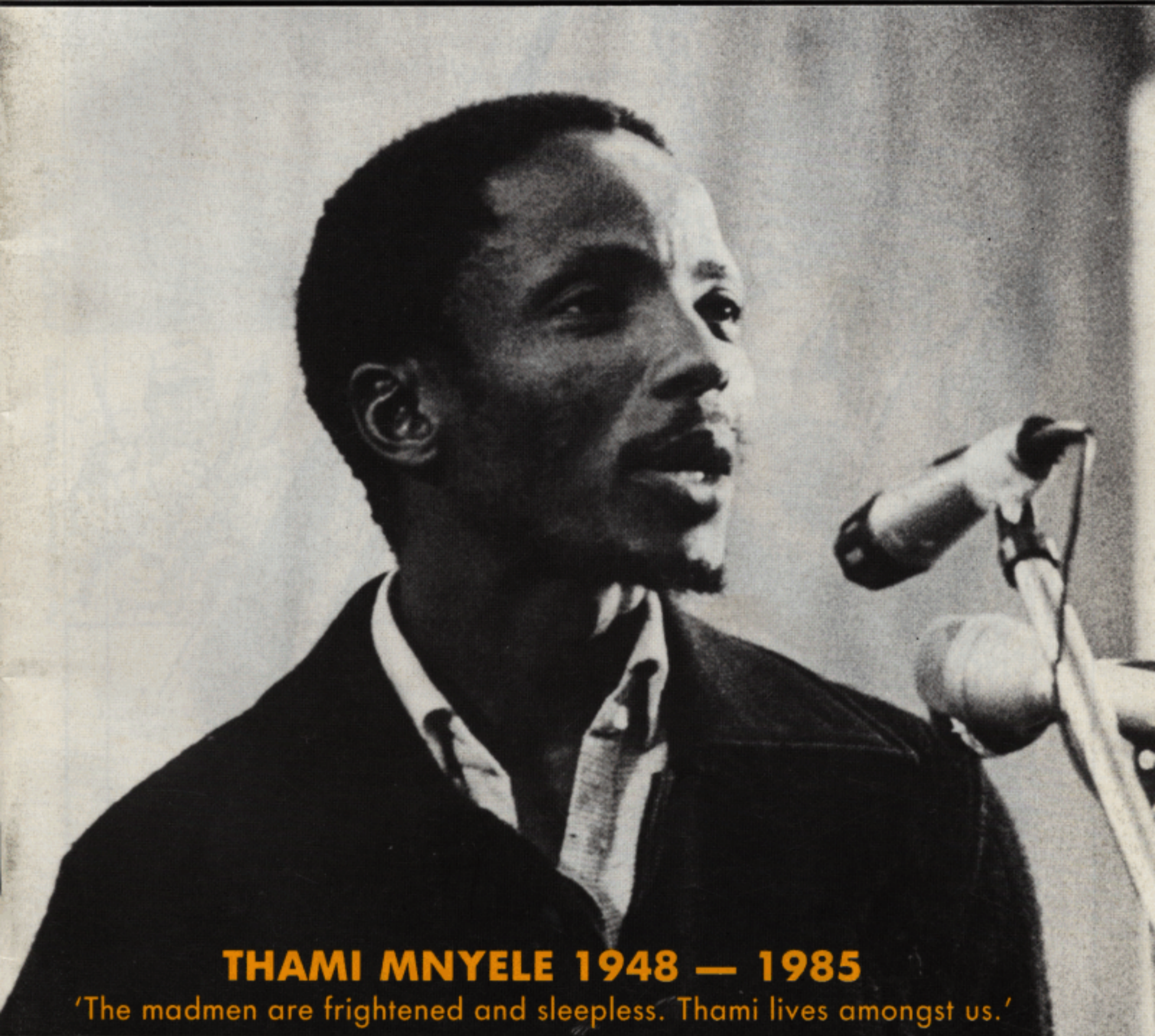


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Cultural Journal of the African National Congress



THAMI MNYELE 1948 — 1985


'The madmen are frightened and sleepless. Thami lives amongst us.'

INSIDE

INTERVIEW WITH
KINGFORCE SILGEE

THOUGHTS FOR
BONGIWE DLOMO

'APARTHEID MUST
BE ISOLATED'



Pen and ink drawing of Johnny Dyani by **MILES PELO** — a South African artist and ANC member born in 1960. He started painting seriously after the 1976 June 16 uprisings. He has exhibited his works in Pretoria, Johannesburg, Gaborone, Dar es Salaam and Togo. He has worked as a graphic artist with the **MEDU ART ENSEMBLE** in Botswana and in Tanzania he worked with the Organisation of African Unity **LIBERATION PRINTING PRESS**. Presently he is studying in London.

'84
Miles Pelo

Johnny Dyani, one of South Africa's best bass players died on the 25th of October, 1986, in Berlin, Germany. RIXAKA will cover Johnny's life and work in a future issue.
HAMBA KAHLE JOHNNY.



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FORWARD



To the Reader

With the declaration of the state of emergency on June 13, hundreds have died, thousands are incarcerated; the media, nationally and internationally, has been muzzled. All organised activity — which in any case has always been viewed with suspicion and fear by the Pretoria regime — has been declared illegal. People of our country now find themselves in the throes of the kind of repression which can only exist in a Kafkaesque nightmare. But the truth continues to be told. This issue comes also in the wake of the murder in cold blood by the regime of cultural workers such as Thami Mnyele a year ago on June 14 in Gaborone and Mary Nomkhosi Mini in Maseru in December.

As of this writing, the raging fires set to raze down the Crossroads resistance have not died down. The smouldering embers cannot hide the fact that the women of that community went forth and performed plays, sang songs and declaimed poetry about their struggle — our struggle. And the world, sometimes so fickle, dare not forget that people lived there. The spirit of their courage and determination lives on. The cultural voices will never be stilled. People lived, resisted, died; the *witdoeke* vigilantes, paid assassins of the racists — nay, the racists themselves whose hands are drenched with the blood of children — cannot sleep. They have set houses and people ablaze. They have first-hand knowledge of the meaning of fire. It burns.

This issue celebrates the work of the cultural

worker. We salute the stand taken by artists, mainly musicians whose resolute position forced the moneychangers of Johannesburg to abort the incredibly cynical Johannesburg Centenary of Gold. It is such actions which demonstrate that cultural work inside our country has become the necessary adjunct of the political consciousness which reigns there. The songs, the chants, the slogans; the poems, short stories and novels that our writers pen at tremendous risk to themselves — all these are rocks of the foundation of our freedom. Each act presupposes and predetermines the demise of the most inhuman regime since Hitler's Nazi Germany. What is more, the regime and its paid servants are not unaware of this fact.

We have featured in the main people who passed away in the course of struggle. This should not dishearten the reader. It is better by far to commemorate the spirit of a fallen hero than to speak about a living ghost who is a pale imitation of his master. And, it must be borne in mind, there are many dead people walking the streets of our country; many of them have been given the seats of the mighty in the impotent so-called governments of the bantustans.

When President O.R. Tambo exhorted the cultural worker to "let the arts be one of the many means by which we cultivate the spirit of revolt among the broad masses," he must have known that the inevitable conundrum in which South Africa now finds itself was coming. Through this,

as cultural workers, we are enjoined to make the community issues our issues; the battle-cry that is increasingly deafening on the issue of sanctions should be taken, through the arts, through the length and breadth of our country. The arts must educate. All the specious and spurious arguments that black people are going to suffer if mandatory sanctions are imposed should be set at naught. The question that must be asked and subsequently translated into vigorous action is, since when have the masters become so magnanimous that they spend sleepless nights agonizing over our welfare? Cultural workers must also organise themselves on their front for the consolidation of people's power.

It is logical that cultural workers must hanker and work towards the destruction of the apartheid state. The state has a definite role in guaranteeing that all citizens have access to cultural services, training and values. Given the antecedent of apartheid culture, it is crucial that the previous state apparatus for culture, which has always promoted unequal and racist values be eradicated and new cultural organs be set up in all sectors - visual, performing, technical and crafts. In a word, the doors of learning and culture shall and should be opened.

It is through cultural work that the spirit of the people refuses to die. During the Siege of Leningrad, soccer players never failed to have their football matches even when the players were

almost crawling with hunger. The people knew that as soon as they stopped these matches, this would be the first act of surrender to Hitler. So they played. Musicians were there on the frontlines with their instruments, in the trenches, invoking the spirit of heroic patriotism. We qualify "patriotism" because the version manifested in the AWB fulminations is nothing but a desperate shadow-boxing of a spectre.

It is heartening, therefore, to see the strides that workers have taken, to quote President Tambo in "using their craft to give voice, not only to the grievances, but also to the profoundest aspirations of the oppressed and exploited." The burgeoning theatre performances, the poetry and song that the workers in their various democratic formations have contributed speak of a phase in our struggle that cannot now be reversed or subverted. The African National Congress, through its cultural organ, RIXAKA, salutes these efforts. This development is in tandem with the cultural impulse the German working class developed in the darkest days of the Third Reich. This Reich, like Smith's Rhodesia, was supposed to endure for a thousand years. Today as the people of our country push from ungovernability to the seizure of power, many songs that the children are singing in the face of Casspirs and invading armies, speak of the racist regime in the past tense.

Let us hasten that process!



THAMI MNYELE: A Portrait

When the SADF launched a raid on Botswana on June 14 last year, Thami Mnyele, a gifted graphic artist, was killed. The raiding hordes went into his house and shot up his art-work, much in the same way as Hitler's occupying forces had sacked galleries and libraries of the vanquished.

MONGANE WALLY SEROTE, who knew Thami from the earliest days, has contributed this portrait.

On June 14, 1985, the boer army, SADF, raided Gaborone, Botswana. In cold blood, they killed twelve people, including a child. Among the murdered victims was Thamsanqa (Thami) Mnyele, a young man, a dedicated cultural worker. His broken-limbed bloody body was found outside in the yard of the house where he lived with his wife Rhona. At times their child Sindi lived with them. But on that early morning of gratuitous mass murder Rhona and Sindi escaped; they were not home. Thami's life was snuffed out but his art lives on.

Thamsanqa Mnyele was an artist who believed that cultural work and political work cannot be separated, in fact, that cultural workers had no choice but to be partisan. This conviction led

him to innovative yet resolute cultural endeavours. He was always searching, in pursuit of ways and means of merging art forms into weapons of teaching, mobilising and recording the history of our people. In the final analysis, he wanted to place art in the hands of our own people, as weapons of liberation. This was his daily preoccupation and to this end he did not spare himself. He worked hard, sometimes round the clock, to perfect the skills of his craft. To him the epitome of artistic execution was the effective manner in which it articulated the struggle of the people of South Africa against oppression and exploitation, for liberation.

In life and struggle, the boers have robbed us of a good friend and fine comrade. His life, his

presence was a series of little actions, soft-spoken statements, that have accumulated into profound meaning here and now. He touched us. We are instructed! He was reticent and could be quiet, for hours even in the company of friends. But he could also dominate time, talking about music and playing it endlessly. A fine singer, he was sensitive to the elements that made song. Humming with a guitar, with a saxophone or trumpet, he would produce the sound of drums simultaneously as he sang along with a track. Then he would burst out laughing both in appreciation of the musicians and at his listeners. He knew the provenance of most recordings, the artists and the instruments they played and so he would always select the appropriate



music to match time, mood and place. His collection of audio tapes was broad, including jazz, traditional Mbaqanga, classical and international folk. His music kept friends together.

Thami also loved literature. Highly selective of what he read, he studied every novel, play and poem carefully. In informed conversations, he would then choose a line, a verse, a paragraph or a character from a book and demand that it be enjoyed and appreciated. He would assert what it does for our life.

Thami lived his life through music, he read literature and he observed everyday life intensively. From these three he was inspired and became a fine painter and graphic artist. He watched people closely, listened to them carefully, fought them and loved them intensely — and thus derived material for his work. His humour was made up from the small things of ordinary life — imitating the walk and talk of old people, the way they hold a knife, a spoon or a pipe. Or he would act out his friends' peculiarities, their unconscious gestures.

Imitating them in their presence, he would laugh until tears rolled down his face. All these, finally, emerged in Thami's work.

Thami was born on the 10th of December, 1948, in Alexandra Township. His father was a priest. He used to say, his mother is a woman made by Alexandra Township. He had brothers and a sister who died. I remember the first time I met Thami, it was in 1970 in a friend's house. A photographer, in Alexandra, had asked me to meet Thami who he said was a painter. By then I had been to many art exhibitions and knew many of the best of South Africa's painters. Thami was there, then, in that house and had brought one of his works which he had carefully wrapped in brown paper. I kept wondering what we were going to see: a Dumile imitation, or a Legae imitation, or an Arnold imitation? But, then, the point here is that I had already judged Thami. There was then something which the white galleries had termed Township Art, and the artists I've named above had done it all, most young artists were imitating them. *That was*

the only way to success, whatever that is. Out emerged Thami's work. A small pig, neatly drawn of a combination of wax crayons. The small pig was strangely fat and round but drawn with amazing accuracy. There was a strange silence in the house. My friend and I looked at each other. Thami was staring somewhere away from us to the ceiling. He kept scratching his cheek and chin. Before we could say anything, he wrapped the work neatly in its brown paper. He called the work Prodigal Son. We all laughed!

From that day on, many of us, writers, painters, photographers, musicians met and we would talk endlessly, into the early hours of many mornings, about our liberation and culture. Eventually, out of those discussions, we found ourselves organised into what we called Mhloti Black Theatre. Mhloti Black Theatre produced a programme of poetry, music and speeches by leading black politicians. These were performed in schools, churches and on political occasions. The programme was taken to many parts of our





THAMI MINYELE

country, including Botswana. Thami ably acted Malcom X. All of us including his co-actors always looked forward to that moment when Thami would emerge from backstage, take front stage, mime the touching and removing of spectacles and render his lines with a chilling slowness and deliberateness. When he was not on stage, at home, in a room he and I shared, Thami was painting. While there were still signs that he was still influenced in his work by religion, his work was changing, beginning to portray the people of Alexandra. To watch Thami's work, several unfinished prints hanging on the wall of our room while he worked on them, and to listen to jazz and Mbaqanga as played by Gwangwa, Masekela, Semanya, Brand and others, turned the house into an emotionally tense place. Mihloti led to Mdali, which was supposed to become an artists' national organisation. The South African Students' Organisation's General Students Councils, and the Mdali Annual Festival of the Arts absorbed us. Thami began to illustrate books from these occasions and to exhibit his works. He died proud that his first exhibition was among the people and not at galleries in town ready for export abroad.

At one of the conferences, cultural workers had put together a poetry and music programme to perform. Thami emerged from backstage carrying a guitar. He sang and played the guitar. It was the first time for most of us to see him play a guitar. He sang Nina Simone's song: Assignment.

Thami came to live in Botswana in 1978. He joined Medu Art Ensemble, a cultural group made up of Batswana, South Africans and European expatriates. He pioneered the graphic arts unit of this group in producing political posters. He became the head of the graphic unit and later the chairman of the group. The graphic unit became one of the most active units of this group and very influential. Posters from the unit, T-shirts, badges, postcards and calendars are all over the world. In offices, during demonstrations, rallies everywhere where freedom is talked about and fought for, they are there. Have the boers killed Thami?

UMKHONTO WE SIZWE

There were many hours and many days of discussions, argument, in the group. These struggles within a struggle enabled us to produce and learn about culture and struggle.

At times, Thami could be a simple man. He had this almost

childlike wonder at how the people of South Africa have built the African National Congress and their army, Umkhonto We Sizwe. As an ANC cadre, Thami forever tried to express how he was humbled by the seriousness with which our leadership took cultural work, in the same way they did other work in the Movement. He talked endlessly about this. And there is no doubt, the ANC had nurtured Thami the man, Thami the cultural worker into a new man the new South Africa is awaiting. Thami fell at his post, a resolute man, optimistic about the future and ready to take up his next assignment.

ANC CADRES

We miss Thami. And, like him, we have contempt and hatred for a system which is run by madmen who, in their small minds, are unable to accept change. They are soaking the soil of our country with the blood of the best sons and daughters of our land, everyday. Thami's work, thoughts, laughter — and some of his best qualities — remain sharp and clear in our minds, and these inspire us to be good ANC cadres, for he was one. The madmen are frightened and sleepless. Thami lives amongst us.

Isolate Apartheid Culture

Speech by Comrade Barbara Masekela, Secretary of the Department of Arts and Culture of the ANC delivered at the opening session of the Workshop on Culture and Apartheid organised by the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement on Friday 25 April 1986 at Trinity College, Dublin.

THE CULTURAL BOYCOTT of South Africa is integral to our campaign for the imposition of mandatory and comprehensive sanctions against the apartheid regime.

It is a call not only for the repudiation of the South African racist regime, but also for their total isolation. Above all, the cultural boycott cannot be divorced from our nation's bitter struggle for the destruction of apartheid and the creation of a democratic, non-racial and united South Africa.

In recent years the world has witnessed a dramatic escalation of state terrorism against opponents of this heinous system. The scenes of indiscriminate shooting, sjambokking and tear-gassing of men, women, youths and even infants; the massacres of South African refugees in Botswana, Maseru and Matola; the massacres at funerals of apartheid victims are daily fare on television screens all over the world. This catalogue, which includes imprisonment, torture, assassination by racist murder squads, forced removals of more than 4 million blacks, unparalleled infant mortality in our land of plenty - this incalculable human loss is reminiscent of Hitler's genocide in Nazi Germany. Yet it is all occurring in our time. This blood, these tears and this sweat of exploited workers exists side by side with the indolence and arrogance of white privilege in South Africa. Yet the flow and direction of events is inexorably towards the realisation of freedom.

Today, we exhort you in the name of the African National



Congress to say - Mandela, Sisulu, Kathrada, Mbeki, Mhlaba, Motsoaledi, Mlangeni - - to say --Raditsela, Goniwe, Mxenge, Bathandwa Ndondo - -to say --Oscar Mpetha; Gugulethu, Langsa, Sharpeville, Mamelodi, Alexandra, Uitenhage, Lamontville, Stutterheim, KwaNobuhle, Soweto, Umlazi, Krugersdorp, Welkom, Crossroads -- to shout the names of all the hamlets, villages and townships of South Africa whose chilling determination and courage speaks for itself.

Juxtaposed with this state of terrorism is the inspired and united resistance against apartheid which involves our people in all their various formations as civic, trade union, student, youth and cultural organisations. That is South African culture today.

The drive to destroy the apparatus of apartheid, to pull out all its roots, cannot be stemmed. The momentum towards our seizure of power and the establishment of democracy in our country is irreversible. It is our

responsibility, the national liberation movement of South Africa, to sustain this drive in all its ramifications. We in the ANC see this task as a major responsibility. Over and above all else it is the people of South Africa who are exhorting us to isolate the apartheid regime, who are saying Mandela, the Freedom Charter, who are upholding the ANC flag and demanding the unbanning of the ANC, who are in open defiance of the illegal authorities, who want nothing less than one man one vote in a unitary South Africa. That is South African culture today.

CULTURAL BOYCOTT

No consideration of the cultural boycott that looks away from the daily occurrences in the streets of South Africa, the daily struggle and sacrifice, is of any consequence. The cultural boycott is no rigid theoretical discourse. It is a practical political exercise that must be designed to aid and abet the initiatives of our patriots against the scourge of racist economic exploitation. It is a question of choosing to betray or support our struggle for national liberation. It calls upon all of us to reject outrightly false reforms, palliative measures and delaying tactics - as those whose blood flows in the streets are daily demonstrating.

The categorical imperative of the cultural boycott is to exclude all foreign artists, academicians, scientists and sportspersons from performing in South Africa, in person, film or otherwise. The highly selective and occasional integration of public facilities,



The Penny-whistler — Pen and ink drawing by MILES PELO

for example, in Sun City, Bophuthatswana, or when teams such as the All Blacks or the British Lions are visiting is nothing but a mockery of our suffering. We want permanent equality in all of South Africa for all of the people. Then, What is apartheid culture?

It is an exclusionary culture based on the domination of the white minority over the black majority. It devalues black culture, cheapens black life and distorts the perceptions of white South Africa.

Apartheid culture is an extension of conscious and deliberate educational deprivation which results in neo-slavery. Thus black cultural workers, as with workers in other sectors, do not have equal opportunities. Cultural workers have no unions as yet. They have no proper rights to their creative and productive efforts.

Apartheid culture distorts reality. It attempts the fragmentation of the majority population into "tribes", seeks to engender chauvinism in its systema-

tic efforts to prevent cultural unity.

Apartheid culture is genocidal, relegating the black majority termed superfluous to reservations called bantustans, where unemployment, rampant disease from malnutrition and starvation, infant mortality is the order of the day.

Apartheid culture is repressive. It seeks to silence opposition through censorship, even unto denying photographing of actual police and army atrocities against people; banning orders, torture, assassination, imprisonment, judicial murder and massacres.

Therefore, the position of our people, be they student, industrial worker, artist, trade unionist or other oppressed is not alleviated by the red carpet visit of foreign artists who come at the invitation of and are paid lucrative sums by the racist oppressor.

It is the consensus of our people that such visitors are mere cultural collaborators with fascism and we reject them out-

rightly. For their own safety, we also caution them that, in the present violent turmoil, instigated and maintained by the regime, their safety cannot be ensured.

Consequently, we call upon academicians, sportspeople, scientists and all cultural workers to desist from visiting South Africa. They must further dissociate themselves from the criminal regime by refusing to have their products purveyed in South Africa.

As anti-apartheid activists, we must also highlight those who have spurned apartheid invitations in a principled and public fashion. It is the responsibility of the international anti-apartheid movement to ensure that these activists are honoured publicly and involved in constructive actions supportive of our overall struggle. It is not enough to merely condemn. We are thinking, for example, of the United Artists Against Apartheid whose Sun City project is now a byword; the initiatives of the Artists

Against Apartheid in Sweden who staged a two-day Festival in Gothenburg; the AAA Festival which took place in Toronto in May, and the AAA recently formed in England. We commend the many other individual artists and groupings who have actively contributed their talent to complement the struggle of our people.

The issue of cultural exchange is also pertinent to the question of the cultural boycott. Certain South African artists who have been sent on propaganda missions by the racist regime to perform or exhibit in countries such as Chile, Israel and Taiwan are to be wholly condemned. South African artists who support, or lend their works, expertise or reputation to the perpetuation of the apartheid concept and system should be systematically isolated and barred from all legitimate international forums, stages, festivals, seminars and halls.

There is an alternative culture in the making both inside and outside apartheid South Africa. In the ANC we have our cultural ensemble AMANDLA, who have performed extensively in Europe, West Africa, Southern Africa and Latin America. Their visits to all these countries have helped them gain insights into their calling and have also mobilised immense international support.

We likewise have students, trade unionists, musicians and other artists studying and working outside South Africa. They are mobilising support and preparing themselves to play a constructive role in a free South Africa. Their exposure abroad is helping them to hone their skills for the tasks still ahead.

ART FOR ART'S SAKE

Inside South Africa itself, we have committed playwrights, poets, actors, musicians and artists whose work is helping to shape the future consciousness of our nation. They too must be beneficiaries of cultural exchange in the form of study, workshop

and performance opportunities that do not often exist for them inside the country.

However, in the climate of misinformation orchestrated by the regime worldwide, it is essential that the ANC be consulted on which artists are true representatives of the people. For instance, the charade "Ipi Tombi" was inimical to the people's struggle and it was correct for it to be roundly condemned and stopped.

This was achieved through co-operation and consultation with the ANC.

By all means the individual

artist, unless married to the noble aims of the people should not be considered a spokesperson of the people. In our present situation we totally reject the notion of art for art's sake.

Our confidence that we will triumph over apartheid is reinforced by the certainty of our just cause. We believe that the escalating violence can be reduced from what would otherwise be a cataclysm by active and effective support of comprehensive mandatory sanctions including the cultural boycott of South Africa.



AMANDLA CULTURAL ENSEMBLE performing in London, backdrop designed by THAMI MNYELE

Martha Mahlangu's Dream on April 6

Yesterday night, my noble son, again in my dream
I read your letter.
Do you remember it? The one you sent me
from your Pretoria death cell!
A crumpled-up piece of paper, so dear to me.
Memories, sad or pleasant, are as painful
as a stiletto in the heart.

I wandered out in search of your lost tomb.
Outside, the autumn sunset
was clear and crisp.
It had been raining profusely,
the last stubborn rains.
I splashed blindly through the puddles
and stumbled into a band
of grimy workmen. They
guffawed, the louts. I shrilled and shrieked.
They went on reviling and ridiculing me.

That was yesterday night. I lost my way.
I came back battered and blue with defeat.
There I sat and forgot
to snuff out my candle.
My heart thumped heavily with vague forebodings
until the grey of dawn.
Today everybody says I have grown thin,
thin as a plucked chicken.

Your letter reminded me that your family never was.
We left your umbilical cord at Potgieter's farm.
That is where your father died.
Do you know how he died?
You might never know
'cause your family never was.

He died of overbleeding from his knuckles.
Potgieter had spat in your father's face.
A sputum that clung like filthy sin.
In great fury your father punched a tall gumtree
nearby with his bare fists like frenzied pugilist.

He resisted to obey in fear and meekness.
He punched it the whole day and then dropped dead.

We put his body on a sledge behind two oxen.
We filled his grave with sandy soil.
We left him alone with his favourite dog.
It sniffed at the fresh soil,
 made doleful and ugly sounds.
It sniffed the soil for three days
 and then dropped dead with exhaustion.

My dear son you were still too young to see
 that sorrowful sight.
You simply crept away into the grove, all alone.
Unschool'd individuality! No wonder your first year
 at a township school was so sad!
Girls poking fun at you and mistresses
 so overflowing with bad temper on Mondays.
Everybody thought you were so uncouth.
How tormented you felt,
 how thoroughly wretched! At bedtime you wept,
 poor little boy, blue with cold.
Your true virtue of character only fermented with age,
 like young beetroot in vinegar.

Your father still pays me visits in my sleep.
A grouchy farm-hand, in winter jostling
 with children for a position at the fireplace.
And me, not to be a killjoy, straddling and sidling up
 to the rickety Welcome Dover.





Your sister is now out of school, at a very young age,
Money is hard to come by. I developed
housemaid's knee and my boss hired
another chambermaid.

Your sister wept with all her pores,
poor little thing.

Oh, my little girl, misfortune is contagious!
What an imp she is, always making me laugh.
Telling me how much I have changed
since you left us.

A quick-witted cherub she is, although something of a tomboy.
I resent to be told how much of my nature has changed.

Do you remember what you used to say?

Mama, don't be faint of heart!

And I would say, Goodness, my child with a heart of lead!
I have changed. I have learnt to hate with certainty.

Intense hatred of the oppressor is half-victory
for every revolution.

My fear has been fully eaten away by ants
like a dead salamander in the sun.

I used to have the heart of a lamb, prudent and kind.

It is only my children who used to think I'm a proper shrew,
keeping them under my thumb.

Today I possess the heart of a ferocious lion.

My finger itches for a gun which spits fire.

Oh, my little fledgeling, what I have said
was only a dream!

If my letter be full of odds,

or too sensible for a dream, it is only because
I forgot to snuff out my candle.

Good dreams are born of dark houses.

KLAUS MAPHEPHA

***ALFREDO**

Our blood united
in the fight against
the beast
that preys
for profit

our sinew entwined
in the struggle for
peace
from power
through plunder
and privilege
through pillage

our nerve knit together
in the war against
insanity
Managua
Huambo
The Golan
Georgetown
San Salvador
Matola
assaults
to halt the progress of
humanity

Makeni
Harare
Gaborone
Guguletu
Soweto
Maseru...

Alfredo
humano
Alfredo
you fell on the soil of Angola
slain by the beast
so desperate to defeat
advancement and peace
in its twisted tentacle
trapped with greed
you heroically performed
your final deed

Alfredo
Cubano
compatriot and friend
your courage drawn
from our joint just cause
your pursuit relentless
without any pause

our spirit is one
enduring through time
embalming your life
enshrining our future
Alfredo's
Cuquita's
future flourishing
from the seed of your death
nourishing
the hungry and oppressed
future forged
through our unity in action
unfolding
the laws of transformation

Ofelia
humana
compatriota e amiga
your lifeblood was drained away

transfused
you now rise triumphant
strengthened and steeled
in the struggle
your flesh fused forever
in the fight for mankind
the fusion you had with Alfredo
eternally etched
in our hearts and our minds
the love we all share for
Alfredo

Zarina Carim

***ALFREDO ARMANTAROS** served in the Cuban diplomatic mission in Lusaka between 1978 and 1982 where he became close friends with the ANC; later posted to serve alongside MPLA as a soldier in the Cuban army. On the eve of his return to Cuba, in 1984, he was killed in an ambush near Huambo. He had just turned 28. His wife Ofelia and two children now live in Havana.

Tribute

by Jan Carew

Introduction

The distinguished South African writer and African National Congress activist Alex La Guma died in Havana, Cuba, in October, 1985. We had met accidentally in Moscow, and it was one of several encounters over the years, a month before his death. It is a loss that will be mourned by friends and admirers all over the world. Dylan Thomas once wrote that, "After the first death, there is no other ...," but, indeed for writers and activists of Alex La Guma's stature, this is hardly true, for, after his tragic and premature passing, his works, the cause to which he dedicated his life, his diamond hard integrity, have given a new lease on life to the hearts of those who remember him. He has left us a heritage, as Homer once declared, about his literature, "more enduring than bronze, more lasting than the pyramids."

Alex, Alex, only last September we had met in the cavernous depths of the Ukraine Hotel in Moscow. I was running down the marble staircase between the mezzanine and the ground floor, and there you were with your wife in the midst of the hotel lobby bustle taking it all with a protean calm. When we greeted each other, I thought that you looked a bit tired. But, when you explained that you had just flown in from Pongyang, I knew that you were in fact wrestling with jet lag and your body-clock was trying to adjust to what must have been a ten-hour difference. After you had slept off some of the jet lag, we met in the park opposite the hotel. It was a pleasant Autumn day. Shafts of sunlight were striping the heroic bronze statue opposite us and children were tumbling in the grass at its base. One adventurous child had even climbed up and was clinging to the bronze coattails of the

statue. I remember your saying that for the first time in a long exile, the turmoil in southern Africa which was rocking the apartheid system to its foundations, had created conditions whereby you might be able to return to a free, non-racial home country within your lifetime.

Our conversation threaded its way from an easy banter to reminiscences. You recalled the day we had driven up to Michael Manley's mountain retreat, when he was Prime Minister of Jamaica, and we were attending an anti-apartheid conference in Kingston. After a desultory interval, we talked about world peace and the upcoming Geneva summit. We also talked about the fact that your applications for visas to attend conferences in the United States had been repeatedly turned down, while the head of the South African Secret Police, a man with the blood of innocents dripping from his hands, had been an honoured guest of the Reagan Administration; but you also expressed admiration for the thousands of Americans from all walks of life who were challenging the sly, malevolent and immoral Reaganite policy of constructive engagement. We talked about the liberation movements in Latin America, East Timor, the Phillipines, and the atrocious act of international bullying that the invasion of Grenada represented.

I knew that when you mentioned, almost casually, the possibility of the end of exile you had made me party to a secret, given me a glimpse of a wound that only the defeat of the fascist regime in South Africa could heal. It was a profound act of trust and I appreciated it. We never spoke about that longing to end your exile again. But, as soon as you had uttered the words, I saw vivid pictures which your marvellously evocative writing had conjured up - avenues of jacarandas and giant azaleas, wild flowers rainbowing mountainsides, parched landscapes and lush ones, black laughter, the voices of children

enlivening the gloaming with cries that sounded like the songs of sea birds, and long cool evenings on the Pondoland coast or stiflingly hot ones in the arid Karoo; these images flashed in a swift and passing kaleidoscope of colour and shape and motion. Having spoken about that persistent core of anguish once, there was no need to resurrect it from hidden casements in your heart again. But, you and I knew that it was there, beating like a persistent pulse under the surface of our conversation.

Alex, you will never return home in the flesh, but your indomitable spirit is rooted there. Its immortal longings so vividly expressed in your writings and the enviable example of your fight for the freedom of your people have seeded the hearts of thousands of young fighters. They will pick up the standard of liberation, that the premature death of a great fighter, a statesman, a distinguished writer and an ANC stalwart, had caused to dip momentarily; and men and women, boys and girls will wave the La Guma banner higher than the stars about Table Mountain.

You had, in the midst of our widely ranging talk, spoken with great warmth about the unstinting hospitality of the Cuban people who had gone out of the way to make their country a home away from home for you. "Somehow, Cuba showed me mirror images of my own folk, and it made the exile easier," you had said. We moved from one subject to the other with the ease that comes naturally when old friends are dallying away precious time in a park on a sun-splashed Autumn day. We lingered for a moment on the subject of how important it was to highlight the profound cultural and historical connections binding Afro-Asian peoples together. We agreed that it was crucial that the sons and daughters of the Afro-Asian diaspora in the Caribbean and the rest of the Americas, should retain cultural contacts with the struggles

of artists, writers, and poets in those vast African-Asian twin continents of polyglot peoples, and endless land and seascapes. I shall work towards reaching these goals with greater zeal and dedication in your name. I promise.

Alex, seeing you at the foot of the stairs in the Ukraine with the crowd of guests milling around you, I realised once again that your face in repose with its high smooth forehead, tufted white hair flaring out at the sides, your seemingly gentle eyes that disguised a diamond-hard commitment, sometimes reminded me of a heraldic symbol. It is curious how when I think about our numerous encounters at conferences, I cannot remember having heard you raise your voice. It was a quiet voice, and accented as it was, it sometimes sounded musical. But, for you, it had become an instrument that you kept under an effortless control. It was as though your voice (and not the proverbial eyes) was the window to your African soul.

It was the same voice that spoke most eloquently and in unforgettable cadences in your writing; and what a stupendous talent you had! By sheer coincidence, the day before we met in the lobby of the Ukraine, I had bought a copy of your novella, *Time of the Butcherbird*, in the Rainbow Publisher's bookshop in Moscow. It was a paperback edition in English that was being used as a text for Soviet students studying English literature and philosophy. What a splendid idea! What a finer text could be found by a contemporary author writing in English!

Having bought *Time of the Butcherbird*, I sat up late into the night reading it. The silences that surrounded me as I read were occasionally punctuated by the furtive sounds one hears coming from hotel corridors - keys turning in doors, and whispered conversations. *Butcherbird* carried me away from my procrustean bed (it was six inches too short for my long frame) and took me into the very intestines

of a small town in South Africa. Your writing bequeathed to that microscopic and cruel arena of apartheid a certain lyrical balance. With your profound creative understanding of the essentials of a great drama, you transformed that small town on the edge of the Karoo into a setting where an epic struggle between good and evil would take place. No one had written more movingly about the collective anguish of the oppressed South African people, or shown us more unforgettable glimpses of their invincible courage and resolution than you have done. Fugard, for all his talent as a playwright, takes his characters to a thresh-



hold of revolt which they never somehow cross; they remain there, trapped and hopeless. Your genius was that you had an inner ear for the people's secret longings, and you articulated those longings through your literary alchemy.

You were, in a very sense, not a novelist writing about revolutionary situations, but a re-

volutionary writer. There was never any question about whose side you were on, but as a first-rate writer, you gave both protagonists and antagonists a human face. You showed how an unjust system often made human beasts of those upholding it, while it enobled those fighting against it. The sermon of Dominee Visser in the last chapter of *Butcherbird* revealed the spurious theological justification for apartheid - that racial separation was ordained by God. Visser seemed bent on justifying Voltaire's satirical remark that the first priest was the first knave to have met the first fool. Above

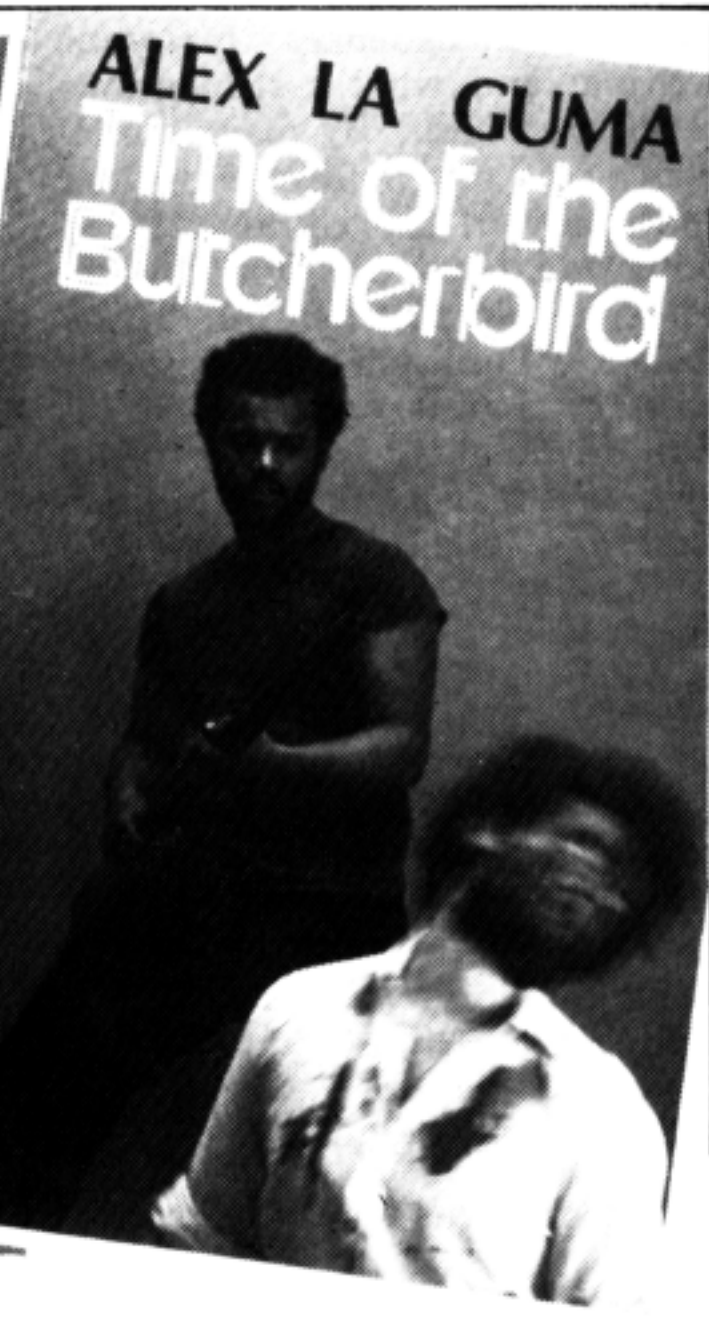
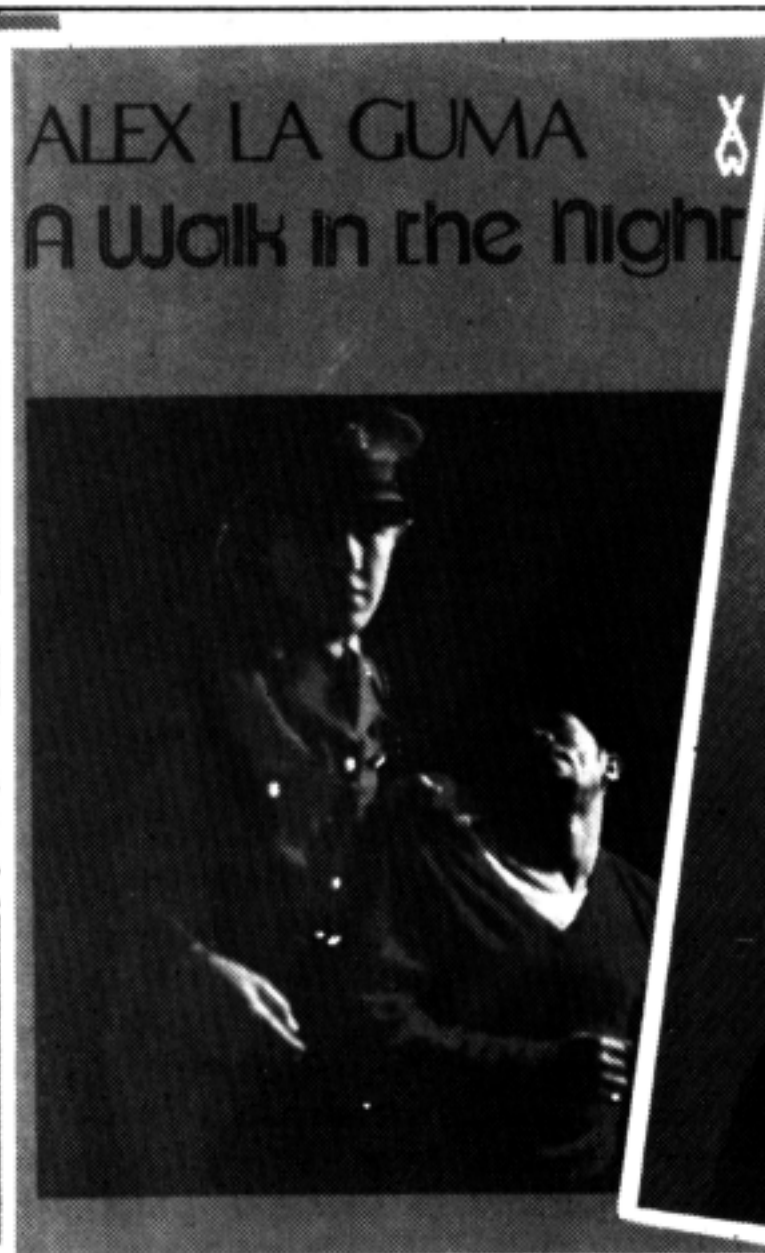
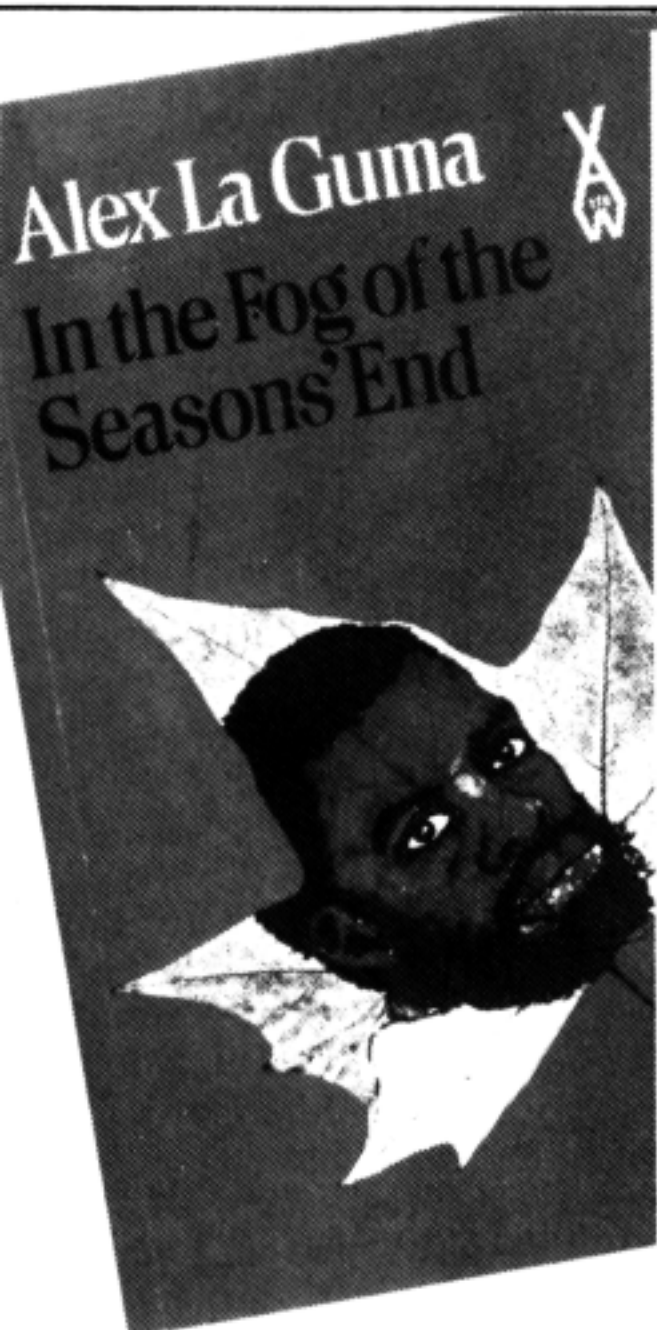
all, Alex, you used your writings like a gigantic mirror to show the downtrodden and the most despised, true and heroic images of themselves. In the *Butcherbird*, your subtle depiction of the awakening of Chief Hlangeni's people to a realisation of their collective power, lends grandeur to their resistance. And this was a prophetic reflection of the

awakening of the downtrodden millions in all of southern Africa. Chief Hlangeni's people were about to be moved to a Bantustan. The apartheid state, acting on behalf of powerful transnational mining interests, was ruthlessly dispossessing them of their ancestral lands. As this cruel drama unfolded, you showed very clearly how it had dawned slowly upon those threatened people that it was better to die resisting than to acquiesce to this act of certain ethnocide. But, inside of the larger struggle was the smaller one that you portrayed very skillfully - Shilling Murile, a young farm worker was about to take revenge on a big landowner who had murdered his innocent young brother. Mma-Tau, Chief Hlangeni's formidable sister, the one whom the people come to regard as the leader of their rebellion, tried to convince Murile that it was much better to become part of a movement against oppression than to lose one's life in an empty gesture of personal revenge. But, finally, it is Madonele, the aged shepherd

who persuaded Murile to join the people's movement. The old man was wiser than the impatient Mma-Tau. He knew that before Murile joined the movement, he first had to exorcise the memory of being a helpless witness to his brother's murder, and the eight years in prison that, he and not the murderers, was sentenced to serve. After Murile's act of expiation was carried out, the next step, that of loosing himself in the people as they struggled for land and life, became as natural as breathing. Besides, the eight years in prison had helped to steel him for that moment when he would join the liberation struggle. The seasoned political prisoners into whose midst he had been thrown, had turned prison into his University of Hunger. He had listened to them and learnt a great deal from their words and their example. With subtlety and skill, you made the reader understand that you were dealing with both individuals and archetypes; and those archetypes of a people awakening were symbols of the whole of southern

Africa rising up to stretch limbs stiff from too much kneeling. The scope and range of your other works like the collected stories in *A Walk in the Night and Other Stories*, the novel *In The Fog of the Season's End*, and that fine and harrowing account of prison and resistance in *The Stone Country*, is considerable, and leaves behind you an enduring heritage. Through your writings and your life, you made a mockery of that shallow claim that African writers should cloister themselves in ebony towers and leave the politics of liberation alone. For you, art and literature were lightning rods catching the incandescent glare of truth and transmitting it not only to your own people, but to people all over the world who are struggling to make the world a better place to live in.

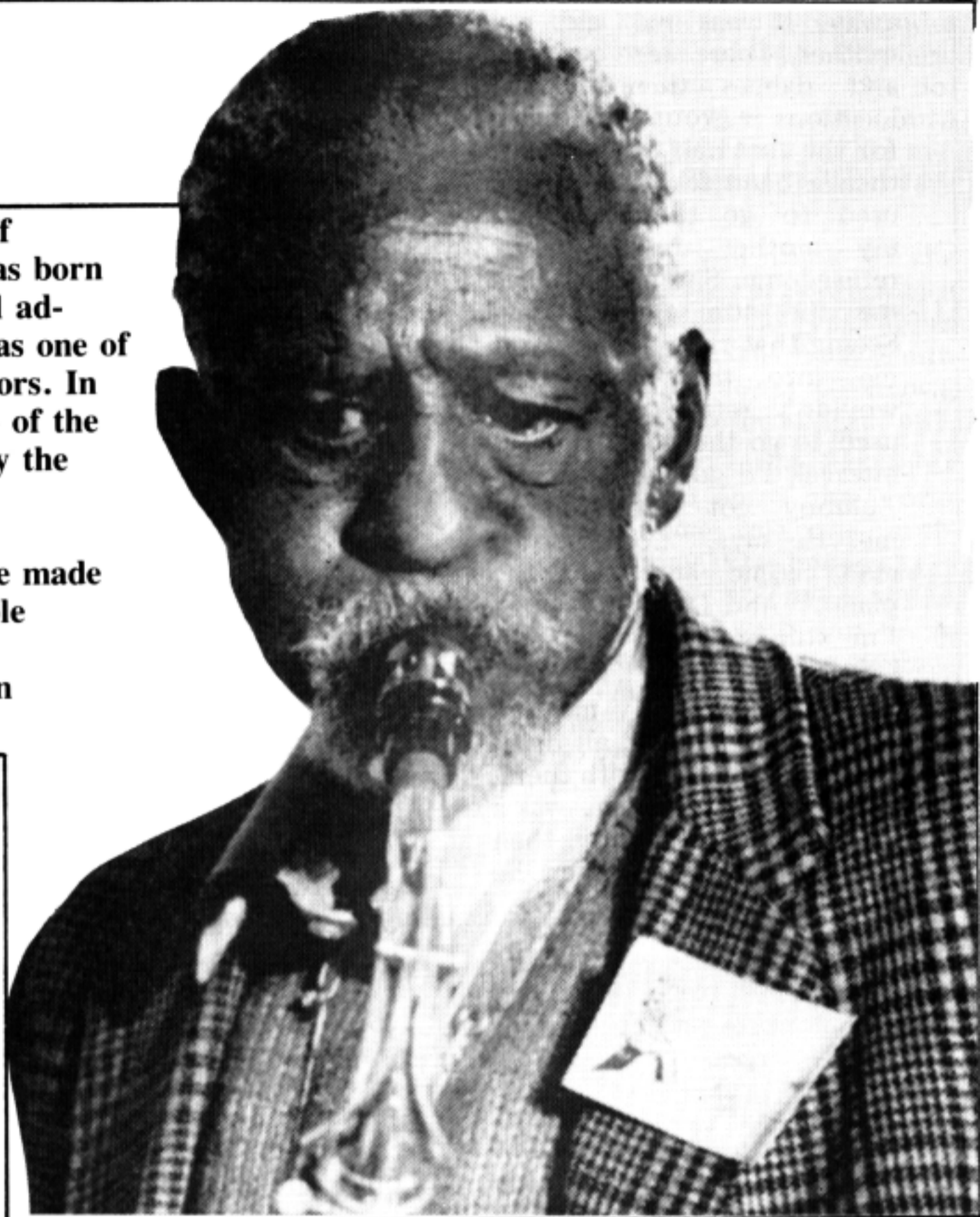
The Carib Shamans in my country say that when great fighters like you breathe their last breath, they go to walk amongst the stars. Go well, Alex. We shall never forget you.



Interview

Known popularly as the Father of African Jazz, Kingforce Silgee was born 73 years ago. In terms of musical advancement in South Africa, he was one of the greatest pioneers and innovators. In 1944, he took over the leadership of the Jazz Maniacs. This means that by the time he died last year, he was no newcomer to the music scene.

RIXAKA reprints an interview he made with MEDU during the memorable Culture and Resistance Symposium/Festival which was held in Gaborone in July, 1982.



Q: What were you feeling last night when playing with those other famous musicians at the opening of the Culture and Resistance Symposium?

A: What actually struck me was the reception I got from Hugh Masekela and Gwangwa the trombonist. When we met they just hugged me. Having not seen them for many years, it was a pleasant reunion. Oh, well — Hugh Masekela was leading the other musicians and he was so excited about my playing too — I had to refuse him giving me a lot of solos.

Q: Have you played with him before?

A: No. Actually, when he was a student at St Peter's in Johannesburg — when I had time on Saturdays I used to go there and show them little tips... Father Huddleston had formed that band for them and bought them instruments.

Q: What about Gwangwa — have you played with him before?

A: It's the first time I've played with both.

Q: . . . was that like something you used to experience when you were playing in the old days?

A: Ooh, definitely — musician amongst musicians, the atmosphere is the same, moreso with people you haven't played with. It's more exciting.

Q: Kingforce, what do you think about this Symposium, the whole idea of the Symposium, the theme "Culture and Resistance" and so on?

A: It's a cultural — and mind-opening (incident) as far as I'm concerned. You get to the in-feeling of what's going on around you.

Q: It is remarkable that you are the only member of the Jazz Maniacs to have made it to Botswana. Can you tell us something about the atmosphere that the band carried with it, and the spirit of marabi?

A: Now, that's most interesting. Funnily enough, my father was a preacher and marabi was a down-and-out thing. We used to go to church in the morning, and at the 11.00 o'clock service and the 3.00 o'clock service in the afternoon. I used to go with him in the morning — in the afternoon he'd leave us at home. Then, when he's gone there was marabi dance as I may call (it). I used to go there, stand at the window and listen to the music. It got itself infiltrated in me. I used to go home (and) try these tunes on the piano — got them well, put in proper chords as a person who's been taught the theory of music. That's how we got on.

And then my father passed

away; it was me and my mother. There were concerts and dances then in the locations — groups of singers for the first half of the night, then a band for the dance. I used to go there — well, my mother usually never refused me. She used to give me the admission money. Seeing that they had brought me into the music, she wouldn't refuse actually. I used to go there and then at interval, I'd go on the piano. Zuluboy got interested in me. He says, "Come along, man, come and play the piano." And I says, "No, see I'm still young." He says, "No, come along."

So, talked to my mother; by now she agreed, all right. I went and played with them. We used to change, he was a pianist then, Zuluboy, then we'd change over. Then he took up playing sax.

Q: Zuluboy?

A: Yes. Now there were two saxophonists. They got another pianist.

Q: Who was that?

A: Chris, we used to call him. I just don't know what his surname was. They used to play. If they got two engagements, I'd go with one saxophonist and a drummer. The other would hire a drummer and go and play there. I got interested in the saxophone too — bought myself one at the pawnbroker's shop for £5, which is R10 these days. You can imagine how much: five pounds! Got myself a tutor, started practising. I wasn't taught the sax, just the tutor. It was right now.

I was reading overseas magazines, music magazines... enlightening this band. There had to be three saxes, you have two saxes already, I'm on tenor. So we agreed, we all could read music; arranged for getting orchestrations. We practised, practised, practised, but still doing the

double-jobs until we had a good repertoire of what we could play, the three saxes. Now (that) we were okay, we didn't take on any double-jobs. Now the band was five people — three saxes, a piano, drums. We went along, kept on adding members on.

We were the most popular band. What made us popular: I knew marabi beat and Zuluboy was a marabi pianist. So we put that beat into our music. That's why we had a bigger following. The roots of the black people, we had them in our rhythm.

Q: This word "marabi" — where does it actually come from?

A: That I wouldn't know. But there's an old man who lived in that era that I can contact and ask... Marabi used to happen over weekends when the girls were off, the domestic servants were off. It used to take place from Friday night until Monday morning. Admission was only ten cents, which was a shilling those days. But you do not get out (of the dance hall). You get out, your shilling is gone. When you come back, it's another shilling again. A lot of drinks, these concoctions: skokian, skomfaan and all that. And methylated spirits. You pay for this, for this doesn't go with your admission. You get out of the place, you know, to get back again it's a bob. Well, the dancing was happiness. In marabi there was just happiness. Well, with the proprietor of the place, it was the money, making all concoctions there, a shilling a jam-tin, you pay a shilling for that which does not go with your admission.

Q: There must have been another side to this happiness, that people almost out of necessity wanted that exciting lifestyle because of their normally very, very sad lifestyle, because there was so

little money and people were living in such bad conditions?

A: Actually, marabi was a relaxation, getting out of boredom and all that. You felt, "I should be happy at some stage in my life." There was dancing, rollicking. It was all happiness, even when you have troubles in the heart you get out having forgotten about them. There was happiness and mixing of people. You find friends that you haven't seen for a long time. You meet them there, they treat you to a scale of skokiaan or skomfaan, you get happy there, start dancing. And there was no ruffians during those days. If you have a quarrel, you get out, you go and fight it out with your fists. No knives were used or anything like that. But when you have finished your fight, whoever wins, when you come back, bob again. Pay a bob.

Q: In the era of the Jazz Maniacs, who were the other musicians that you most admired?

A: None other than the members of the Jazz Maniacs. They were *the* guys. And I got into them, well, the flame grew bigger, when I joined them. Played with them, used to have double shows at times. I split the band, got extras that we can fill up, one group goes that way, another group goes that way. Well, I was more conversant musically than the rest of the members, but all of us could read.

It was when Zuluboy passed away, I think it was February 1944 —

Q: There were strange circumstances surrounding his death, wasn't that so?

A: I was coming to that. We had a job at the Stardust Club. It was Tuesday evening. We'd last seen him on Sunday morning after his

show. Waited, waited, waited at the club, no Zuluboy comes. We decided we will carry on, we'd see what happens. We'd carry on. We'll see how to close up, we'll have to use our heads to cover up his part. Which we did. Finished up at the nightclub, we left. We checked up where he worked, hadn't been seen Monday, Tuesday, it's Wednesday today. We had to go and tell his wife, yesterday he was supposed to be playing, he wasn't there. We checked up at work, he hasn't been there since Monday. So the wife took it up, only to find him at the mortuary.

According to where he was found, he was found next to a railway line in Pimville, which means he was run over by a train, train driver. Which is still unbelievable to me.

Q: How do you think he died?

A: He may have been murdered and then put next to the line.

Q: Why would anyone have wanted to murder him?

A: (The only way I can put it). The wounds were not in line with having been run over by a train.

Q: After his death you took over as the band leader?

A: Yes.

Q: And how was that, was it a quite frightening experience, or were you quite used to the idea of being a band leader?

A: Actually, it was nothing new to me. I was actually in charge of the rehearsals, so after his death we had a meeting and, unanimously, I was appointed the leader by the members. During Zuluboy's time he was the leader on stage and I was a back-room boy, as I may put it. So it wasn't a task. I used to do that task. He used to conduct, so it wasn't very difficult to me.

Q: The Jazz Maniacs went through from the thirties to the sixties, isn't that —

A: No, the fifties, mid-fifties, I can say.

Q: Why did it dissolve?

A: It's this trend of mbaqanga. That's the thing. Actually, I think we are to blame too, because some Sundays we'd allow so-and-so to get a gig.

Q: So you were actually splitting the group into smaller groups?

A: Ja, then they got into this mbaqanga. And it was catching up, a lot of bands broke up. Harlem Swingsters broke up through all that. So we called it a day. Tried it in 1960 and it didn't work. We gave it up altogether. Although I made some recordings after that: well, not with all the Jazz Maniacs — I used to choose suitable

men then we'd record under the name of Jazz Maniacs. That's one thing I'll do. I'll keep that name until I die. It's been a lot to me. Through them I've been very famous.

Q: What do you think of the top musicians in South Africa now? What do you think of top musicians from South Africa like Jonas Gwangwa, Hugh Masekela and so on?

A: Well, they bring happiness to me, to show the world that we've got the stuff here today. You know what? I'm sorry to say, whites are, they always put us in the back. We know nothing as far as people abroad know about black man. So now they are a showcase, to show the world that there is stuff and I'm sure they tell the people overseas we've still left a lot of goods behind.



John Coltrane — Pen and ink drawing by MILES PELO



President Samora Machel 1933 — 1986

The African National Congress and the people of South Africa dip their revolutionary banners in homage to this indefatigable freedom fighter and African revolutionary. Our movement draws inspiration from his example. We are confident that under the sterling leadership of the central committee of the FRELIMO Party the Mozambican people will rise beyond this tragedy and together with their compatriots in the region will redouble their efforts in defence of their sovereignty and for the realisation of the ideals for which Samora Moises Machel has striven and laid down his life.

To the bereaved family, our comrades in FRELIMO and the Mozambican people we offer our heartfelt condolences in this hour of great sorrow.

**The Spear of the Warrior
has fallen.**

Let us pick it up as we say:

A Luta Continua!

A Vittoria e Certa!

Extract from the statement of the National Executive Committee of the ANC on the death of Comrade Samora Machel.

JOSINA, YOU ARE NOT DEAD

Josina you are not dead because we have assumed your responsibilities and they live in us. You have not died, for the causes you championed were inherited by us in their entirety. You have gone from us, but the weapon and rucksack that you left, your tools of work, are part of my burden.

The blood you shed is but a small drop in the flood we have already given and still have to give. The earth must be nourished and the more fertile it is the better do its trees flourish, the bigger are the shadows they cast, the sweeter are their fruits.

Out of your memory I will fashion a hoe to turn the sod enriched by your sacrifice ... And new fruits will grow.

The Revolution renews itself from its best and most beloved children.

This is the meaning of your sacrifice: It will be a living example to be followed.

My joy is that as patriot and woman you died doubly free in this time when the new power and the new woman are emerging.

In your last moments you apologised to the doctors for not being able to help them.

The manner in which you accepted the sacrifice is an inexhaustible source of inspiration and courage.

When a comrade so completely assumes the new values she wins our hearts, becomes our banner.

Thus more than wife, you were to me a sister, friend and comrade-in-arms.

How can we mourn a comrade but by holding the fallen gun and continuing the combat.

My tears will flow from the same source that gave birth to our love, our will and our revolutionary life.

Thus these tears are both a token and a vow of combat.

The flowers which fall from the tree are to prepare the land for new and more beautiful flowers to bloom in the next season.

Your life continues in those who continue in the Revolution.

A poem by Samora Machel to his wife, Josina, who died during the liberation war.



Comrade President O R Tambo with Comrade President Samora Machel at the funeral in Maputo of Comrade Moses Mabhida, March 1986

Poetry from Mozambique

Jose Craveirinha is Mozambique's leading poet; designated a Prophet of Independence, he was imprisoned by the PIDE in the 1960s. He is today a prominent figure in the Mozambican Writers Association. He was a close friend of Comrade Alex La Guma.

Since my Friend Nelson Mandela Went to Live on Robben Island

Since the tribunal when my friend Nelson Mandela
Sentenced Mr John Vorster to everlasting prison
and decided to live with a few more people
on a tranquil island,
it was a shame that four million
“whites only”
were detained in South Africa.

And with regard to this, do you know what happened?
Nothing special in psychological terms,
as the sixteen million didn't understand
their dramatic social dilemma
and aren't letting a political question
turn them back now
from using bombs.

And after all this, my friend Nelson's wife —
seeing that her husband had ordered the freckled Mr Apartheid,
ragged with incoherence, to leave the prison dwelling —
will ask at home, towards late afternoon, “Dear Nelson,
where are we going to relax a little tonight?”
And my friend Nelson, a good-natured husband,
shrugging his shoulders so strengthened in the rallies
of solidarity with all those in the island of solitude
imprisoned by millions in the prison of ideas
will answer: “I don't know, my dear.”
And unemployed, like a worker on his holidays,
Nelson will puff out smoke from his pipe
over the ancient route of the Cape of Good Hope,
and with his eyes diving into the Atlantic and Indian Oceans
turning to Winnie, he'll add: “My dear,
shall we go to the cinema in Pretoria
or in Soweto?”

So I remember as if it was now the general amnesty,
how my friend Nelson in the pleasure of his island villa
aside from his lion of nerves sharpening his claws on the walls
from the prison sitting at the end of the continent piled up with
news,
even granted amnesty to the eternally condemned Mr John Vorster.
Then I remember too the supermanifestations of gratitude
of those four millions, vaccinated against their fatal whiteness
crying out, "Thank you very much!" when they were exempted
from their duties of flying the vulture mirages over Soweto
with no more taxes to pay for BOSS agents spying over Soweto
or finishing with salary deductions to pay for Panhard tanks
that make Soweto children sick from gunpowder ice cream
and even freeing everybody from permanent medical assistance
caused by the contaminated personnel of uranium laboratories
hidden somewhere in maximum security
making some ultra-secret thing
that the whole world knows about
except the headman
of a bantustan.

And a special notice is called to the situation
of the four million South Africans when they were nationalized
into African citizens of the same country as my friend Nelson,
and he, shooting his name to all the Earth's news broadcasts
from the rest resort called "Robben Island"
in the solution on behalf of sixteen million people
plus the other four million (minus BOSS) —
because the time factor is vital
so that Nelson goes to the cinema
arm in arm with Winnie
be it a theatre
in Johannesburg
or in Soweto.

So with regard to the situation of my great friend Nelson,
the psychological problems of that old amnestied criminal, John
Vorster,
and the phenomenon of Robben Island surrounding South Africa
form all sides —
the measures to be taken are laid bare in this report.

As for the sixteen million compatriots of the Mandelas
working overtime for the benefit of the four million
still detained in their respective epidermises —
if it wasn't for BOSS
Robben Island
and Soweto
all this could be pure demagoguery —
but it's the truth!

JOSE CRAVEIRINHA

Obituary

On December 19, 1985, the murderous agents of the Pretoria regime massacred our comrades and Lesotho nationals in Maseru. One of the people who was butchered that day was Nomkhosi Mini, known to many as Mary Thabethe or Rally. She was a cultural worker of unflagging determination, a founder member of the Amandla Cultural Ensemble.

Nomkhosi Mini, also known as Mary Thabethe, was born in Port Elizabeth on July 16, 1958. With her death in December 1985, the ANC and the youth of our organisation lost a real fighter who had dedicated all her young life to the overthrow of the apartheid system. She had yearned to see People's Power in her lifetime.

She began school at the age of seven at Kama Lower Primary School where she did her sub-level education. From here she went to New Brighton Higher Primary School where she did her Standard Three to Standard Six. After passing Standard Six, she went to Cowan High School and completed her Junior Certificate level.

At the time she was doing her Form IV in 1977, student uprisings had spread through the length and breadth of South Africa. She was arrested for participating in a student demonstration against Bantu Education, together with several other students. They were taken to New Brighton Police Station in Land Rovers where they were brutalised by police through the liberal use of batons and sjamboks. She described her treatment there, how they were beaten "as if we were dogs." They were deprived of sleep for days on end and given the water treatment. She was singled out for brutal treatment because the police interrogators were certain that she was "hiding" the truth. They were released after six gruelling days.

She was a member of the South African Students Movement (SASM) which was banned in 1977. She was detained under the draconian and all-embracing Suppression of Terrorism Act (Section Two). She was



MARY THABETHE

interned for fourteen days. After she was released, she hid from place to place until she found a way out into exile.

Around mid-1978, she joined the ANC. She was aided by Mangaliso Matyobeni, her boyfriend, into exile. They both arrived safely in Swaziland from where they proceeded to Mozambique. From here she proceeded to Angola where she joined Amandla Cultural Ensemble in 1979.

Just before she joined Amandla, the organisation saw in her a true fighter, devoted, dedicated and selfless to the cause of the liberation struggle. She was amongst comrades who went for political education abroad. She came back and became

both politically and culturally active in the ranks of our movement. When called upon by the movement to perform her tasks in Amandla Cultural Ensemble, she did that without question or doubt. Within the Ensemble, the organisation once again called upon her to take charge of the political affairs of our women's section. She was also the political spokesperson of this section.

As one comrade in Amandla describes her: "She was more than a comrade. She was a sister and a friend to all of us. Politically, she was more than the word *good*." The other actor and dancer who happens to have participated closely with her in the show says: "In all the missions we undertook since 1980, we managed to score victories, thanks to the political maturity of comrades in the calibre of Mary."

Nomkhosi Mini impressed everyone with her industriousness. She prided herself in doing all sorts of work. To her there were no divisions. Brave to a fault, she once confided to one member of Amandla and said: "My turn will come. I will be amongst those to go first and the last to leave — and no bullet will be on my back."

This is how Vuyisile Mini's daughter was. She never succumbed to police bribery and intimidation. She withstood police torture the way her father, Vuyisile Mini, did. As Mini had sung for freedom to the gallows, so had Nomkhosi to her death.

The ANC is honoured to have had such a cadre in its ranks.

AMANDLA!
LONG LIVE NOMKHOSI!

Revolutionary Song

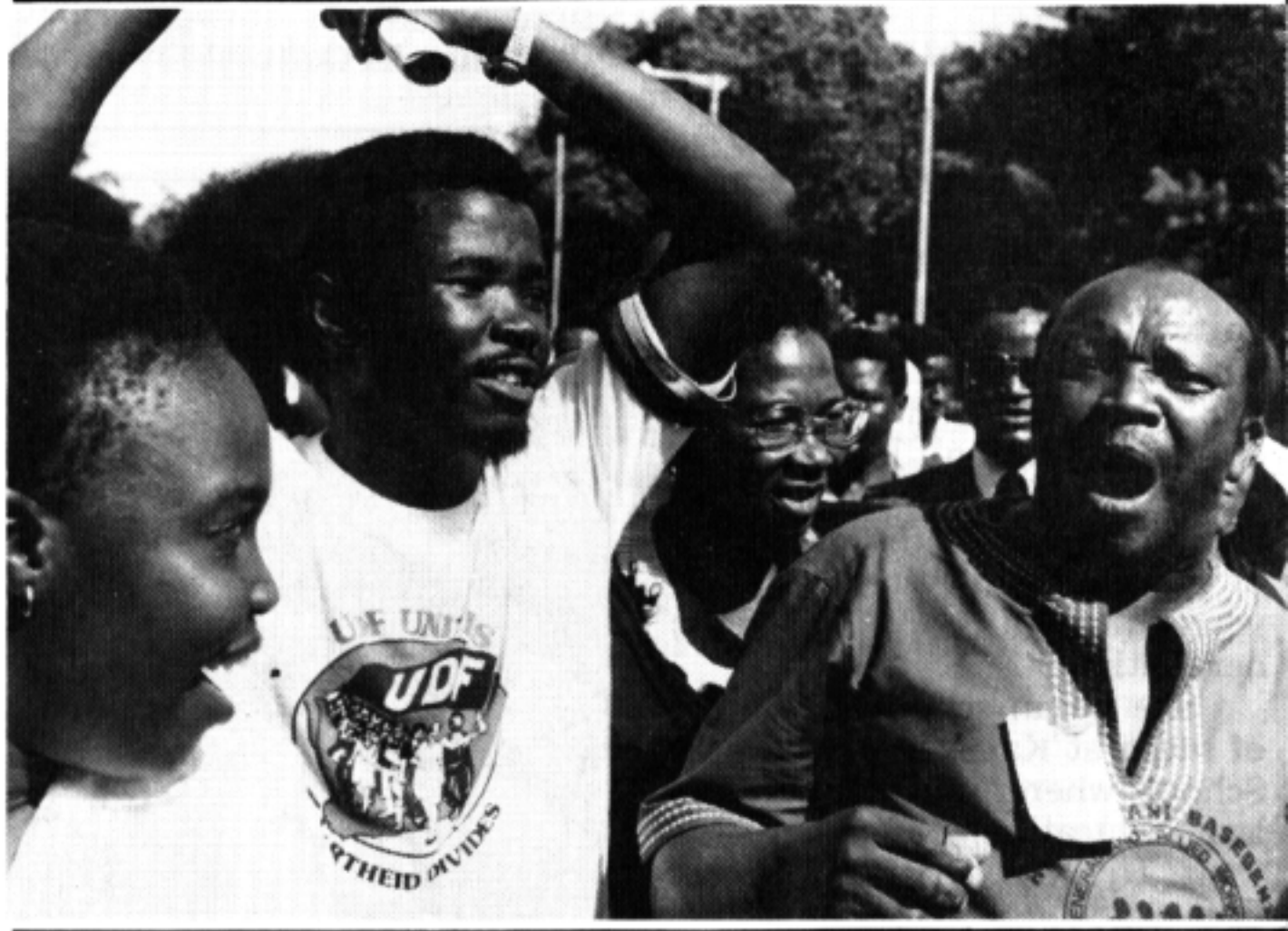
(A letter from Gugulethu)

Last week we were in a funeral and sang revolutionary songs. Mello-Yellos and khwela-khwelas were there in the distance (and there was that expectation that we might be fired at) but we continued singing, anyway, with our fists stuck into the air. When the coffins, which had been draped with the black, green and gold colours of liberation were lowered, one of my friends asked why we call these songs revolutionary songs. Did this mean that all other songs are reactionary? Should they be discarded and banned from our communities? Our reply is no!

In order to clarify this point, we shall briefly deal with the role of music as an art form in general and then go on to look at the specific role of revolutionary music in a society of oppressed and fighting people. In this way we can attempt to bring out the specific features of music which is qualified as revolutionary music.

Music, which is one of the oldest and most developed art forms, is no more than a means of communication. People, singularly or collectively, convey their feelings to society through music. That is why it is possible today to have a song for practically any situation or occasion. People who are not gifted at public speaking tend to be more comfortable singing songs.

Unlike a "dry" speech - - and some speeches can be dry - - music entertains in the bargain. In it, you don't only have lyrics. There is also a brilliant combination of voices of different pitch. These are voices of people, at that given moment, who hold similar views about specific issues. They are brought together by this exercise which also allows them to communicate an important message. The entertaining element means that a very broad section of the community listens



Patriots singing at the funeral of Comrade Moses Mabhida, Maputo, March 1986. Photographer — DAVID BROWN

to this message.

Unfortunately, the entertainment element in music has in the main been used for exploitation in our oppressed societies. In the United States and Britain, the recording industry was, until the recent world recession, one of the most flourishing. This is partly due to the emergence of discos and the technical improvement in musical and recording facilities that resulted in good "quality" sound and the subsequent demand. Entertainment then, has been over-emphasised at the expense of communication. Finally, what should have been educative, communicative and in tandem with the wishes and aspirations of a community becomes vulgarised and denuded of content. If it can bring in the dollars, then it's all right. Furthermore, the musician in these countries cannot escape the stranglehold of the ruling classes. It is exactly this type of musician who cannot understand the meaning of the cultural boycott against racist South Africa.

Our approach and attitude to culture and its role in society, be-

cause it wants the artist to be at the centre of the changing of things, becomes revolutionary. The corresponding songs we sing, in this struggle for change, can be nothing else but revolutionary songs.

Culture, the "cumulative responses of a people to their political, economic and social environment. . . which have resulted in stabilised behavioural patterns", becomes revolutionary when it really acquires a popular character and is used for the furtherance of the aims and objectives of those forces in society that stand for social progress; when it serves the transformation of society, the substitution of retrograde and obsolete socio-economic relations and traditions with new ones. It is essential that it be genuinely popular, that is, it must be the culture of the majority for it to be revolutionary.

REVOLUTIONARY CULTURE

If this, then, is what revolutionary culture is supposed to be, let us look at our revolutionary songs and see whether they satisfy these requirements.

*"Ityala labo
Ityala labo linzima
Ityala labo linzima
Bazoyitheth'inyani ngesib-
hamu*

*Bathumeleni
Bathumeleni ngoMkhonto
Bazoyitheth'inyani ngesib-
hamu".*

Here you have an unequivocal expression of what the masses think of the racists' crimes - - and what should be done to redress these wrongdoings. The might of Umkhonto We Sizwe is invoked as the final arbitrator when the South African Nuremberg comes.

**SYMBOL OF RESISTANCE:
NELSON MANDELA**

*" Mandela Sereletsa
Mandela Sereletsa
Mandela Sereletsa
Sereletsa sechaba sa hesu*

*Marumo re itswaretse
I sale o refa
Rintse retlabanela
Tlabanela sechaba sa hesu."*

That symbol of resistance, Nelson Mandela, is here used by the popular masses to express their concern for the African Nation which is menaced by possible extermination caused by the regime's policy of genocide.

Characteristic of all these songs, the one above especially, is the determination to continue the struggle and bring about meaningful socio-economic and political changes. There is also the unmistakable commitment to the armed struggle and the confidence that this armed struggle shall emerge victorious.

The revolutionary songs, it must be stressed, are in themselves a very powerful mobilising instrument. When the morale is low, they serve as a booster; when disillusionment sets in

and threatens discouragement and disunity, these songs restore the confidence of the people. It is in these songs that the people are bouyed to a deeper understanding of the righteousness of their struggle.

To answer the question raised at the beginning, again we say other songs are not reactionary. One has to commend the artistry of our musicians, at home and abroad, who have expressed the hopes and aspirations - and anguish - of our people through their music. These songs, this music, speaks to us about the beauty of our land, about what has been done to the people of South Africa, both black and white. This music says to us that, were it not for a greedy racist clique, this country would reach new heights, the culture of our people would hold its own in the cultures of the world - and enrich them too. These songs, in a word, mean that South Africa must be changed, now!

Cradock, 1985. Matthew Goniwe at the microphone.

On the 27th of June 1985 Matthew Goniwe, Fort Calata, Sparrow Mkhonto and Sicelo Mhlawuli were brutally murdered by apartheid death squads.



Thoughts for Bongiwe

THAMSANQA MNYELE

Bongiwe Dlomo recently held an exhibition at the Botswana National Museum and Art Gallery. When I went to this exhibit, it came to my mind that there is a new art growing at home. It is an historical event in our art that the climate there has developed to the point that it has given birth to a woman artist who can look so directly at the situation around her. Surrounded by Bongiwe's work, I could not help but go back and reflect on the growing of art within our society.

How can any graphic artist make public observations and suggestions on the state of the visual arts at home? The act of doing so carries with it the risk of implicating that artist as spokesman. Idealistic, perhaps arrogant. On the other hand I find it equally dangerous that we should carry on the wornout culture of resignation when major decisions are made over our work, indeed over our lives as a people. This paper is far from representative. Nevertheless in complete composure I think it is needed that certain things be said by the visual artist in my country. Failure to do so implies grave ignorance of those things which make or even can break our lives as a people.

Over a lengthy period of time I have been asked why, in South Africa, when whole communities are threatened with extinction by a soaring cost of living; when whole communities suffer dismemberment through forced removal; when the broad majority of the people are declared foreigners in the country of their birth; when people are crudely and ruthlessly suppressed through rushed pieces of legislation, detentions, massacres of workers and students; when, therefore, whole communities resist this genocide through organising themselves into civic organisations, trade unions, women's organisations and student organisations; there has been disturbingly little visual arts output in the country or abroad which is organically related to these community efforts. Neither has there been a firmly grounded political voice from this quarter, let alone a broad art movement with an obvious national commitment. So goes the concern.

It is my contention that the prolonged strife and struggle that manifests itself in cultural work, namely in the visual arts, can be traced down to the root of the national political situation in the country. Any understanding of the development of visual imagery must therefore recognise this. That principle which governs traditional art still is valid today; i.e. that art must have a function: a walking song, the sculpture that serves as a chair, the majestically decorated houses of

the Ndebele speaking communities. The subject matter is drawn from the actual activities of the people in the living surroundings, the source and supreme function of art. We may go further to say that the actual act of creating the visual imagery is informed by the community and nourished by it, consciously or unconsciously, and that it is the community which will or must act as audience. Again we can take the risk of stating that the skills of execution, the intimate workings of individual imagination etc. cannot exist outside human experience, i.e. the community.

In contrast the development of visual art in South Africa in this century, or underdevelopment thereof, was shaped by the factors that wield political power, in defence of state interests. With effective employment of Capital and other means such as high technology, skilled manpower, the state of the arts was determined and controlled. Art galleries, the church, school, all formed and added the processing machinery, the finishing touch.

It will be noted that most artists in South Africa, like all the indigenous majority, seldom managed to acquire formal education beyond secondary school. And to compound the problem no formal educational institution ran an arts course, at least for Africans; hence, the responsibility was taken over by foreign missionary stations. It is important to point this out in order to understand the workings of the system at an intellectual level. Fort Hare only introduced the art curriculum in the middle seventies, and the course is at degree level, this means that even the highly talented person cannot take the course without a matriculation certificate. (Perhaps this has been changed.) Other schools that offer the course, like Endaleni in Natal, only do it without going beyond the mere level of crafts handy work, as teaching aids. The mission art school offered the course but also confined itself cautiously to the various art techniques and "art history", meaning European art history, with subtle avoidance of state confrontation. Maybe they subtly collaborated.

The art that sprang from this experience was seldom encouraged out and away from biblical themes, African landscape, wildlife, myths and legends. No explanation of the immediate social political phenomena. Where an individual artist dared attempt to reflect a political theme, treatment of this issue lacked depth of involvement. The work seemed rushed and lacked conviction. Sometimes this type of work seemed too self-involved and was devoid of that outward thrust;



it lacked an upright posture, an elevated head, a firm neck, and a tight muscle. Or shall I put it this way: the images are totally abstracted without obvious course, distortion of the limbs is acute. The subject matter is mystified and at this extent the work has lost integration with real things in our life; the work sags under a heavy veil of mysteriousness. Perhaps this is the essence of the work? The disappointing fact about this approach to art is that the picture is deprived of that essential dynamic element: immediacy of communication with the community, the natural makers and consumers of art. Or perhaps the problem lies in that the artist had begun to look for a different audience, in the galleries and the critics who asked for "strange African art"? It is at this stage that the political motives (or clarity) of the artist are put into sharp focus: his class interests as opposed to those of the people. Art is not neutral, Dikobe stated.

The elements of distortion, mystification, abstraction, romanticism are not negative in themselves and can be put to positive and effective use, as in the indigenous idiom. This calls for maturity of temperament, clearer social awareness and skill of the working hand. I must confess that, in my opinion, we have not been successful enough in maintaining control over these factors.

It has become obvious that with developments at home today, the country is in grave need of a

new calibre of cultural worker, notably in the visual arts and song. The one we have at this moment has yielded too willingly to the dictates of repression. We must now create this new man and woman whose visuals and song will be roundly informed by the most pressing needs and demands of his or her time, place and circumstances: he or she ought to be articulate but simple as to be accountable for his or her work. The country calls for that calibre of cultural worker with clear political insight, a skilled hand and firm revolutionary morality.

And indeed, with the absence of this calibre amongst us, is there any wonder then that no collective spirit, no single-mindedness of purpose, no solid, patriotic, consistent art movement has taken root among our struggling people? Is there any wonder then that no union of the visual arts is forthcoming in our country? Is there any wonder that the exhibition of committed art that was being organised by Staffrider failed to take place due to the absence of work in this direction (see Staffrider, Vol 3, No. 4)? Is there any wonder that the art collective in Katlehong received Piet Koornhof and other government ministers as guests during their exhibitions? Finally and most crucially, is there any wonder that the house of the figure head of the art collective was recently petrol bombed by the disgusted community of Katlehong (see Rand Daily Mail extra, Oct. 5, 1984)

But there have been exceptions, those workers who suffer constant state harassment, detention, exile, death and madness. These artists deserve our political support and respect. I must take the risk of including names at random: Dikobe waMogale, Gavin Jantjies, Lionel Davis, Peter Clark, Gamakhulu Diniso, Manfred Zylla, Bongiwe Dlomo and others. The ones listed here vary broadly in terms of both community involvement in their work and general political activity. But disturbingly, it was idiosyncratic of our artists that when they developed political consciousness, they automatically deserted the art profession for "something more practical and real", as one put it. This analysis is overcome with shortcomings, but it is understable. Dikobe, Gavin, and Bongi, like all artists today, have been taught to work too much as individuals, away from the collective. This must be resisted. The system of fragmentation, the tendency towards individualism, exclusiveness and isolation is as moribund as that of divide and rule.

In contrast, there are just the beginnings of a new approach to art growing, often from these same committed cultural workers. As the grass-roots organisations gain in strength, some artists are finding a new home for themselves and their work. Mpumalanga Arts Project, Community Arts Project, the Johannesburg silkscreen workshop. We are beginning to see banners and posters and graphics in the trade unions, civic, women's organisations, the UDF. These graphics are the birth of a new culture, conceived in the hopes and aspirations of the community, nourished by the people's organisations.

Dikobe was one of the first graphic artists to actively respond to the demands of his country; and in taking appropriate action met with the heavy hand of the state. Dikobe was handed down a prison sentence of ten years for military attempts to overthrow the state. Before he was arrested, he stated with clarity and typical articulation, both the shortcomings of the present state of art and an appeal for the collective creation of the new cadre. Allow me to express my respect for this man. Allow me to express revolutionary anger at those whose racist deeds are depicted in the work of Bongiwe: forced removals, insensitive resettlement. We hail the fighting communities that inspire Bongiwe's work.

To Bongi herself I must point out though that her pictures need more concentrated working. The pictures deal with serious issues of our lives, but this is done with somewhat half-heartedness. E.g. that rubbish bin and the figure next to it (. . . an old woman?) are mere shapes, dead images. There's no dust nor feeling thereof, no wet — shall I say dampness?, no smell — shall I say stench? The work seems extremely hurried. What unsettles me is that the work can easily degenerate into the realm of the trite and defeatist "township art". But make no mistake, Bongiwe is a committed

artist. In South Africa, where women are doubly oppressed, it takes courage for a female visual artist to emerge and assert herself like Bongiwe Dlomo has done.

There are ways, certainly, of improving our work, of destroying the negative image. We must change our understanding towards the profession. We must read, research, travel, and practice the profession in community development projects. To open ourselves to popular opinion from others and to take criticism well. To do practical organisational work within the arts. We must convene and attend seminars, workshops, be they within or without our profession. These are the actual things which inform and nourish our artwork. Our destinies are determined by them. We must avail our services as cultural workers as well as members of the community to the liberation struggle. This is not a favour but a duty. And finally we must consider adopting the graphic technique in our work for its scope and elastic capacity in regard to the particular nature and size of the issues of our country. One other aspect in line with our efforts to develop the graphic image of our country is the usage of scientific methods and means e.g. camera and printing press. The equipments have to be conquered and tamed to suit our needs and social climate.

Apartheid is huge and ruthless. Therefore we must employ equally huge and complex graphic means to match the efforts of our people's resistance; to work big in concept and size, to organise around unsentimental principles. There can never be artistic freedom or freedom of expression from a people in captivity. This is enough to base our cultural work and organisation on. We need paintings and songs of revolutionary optimism, paintings and songs of unity between the old and the young, men and women and whole communities. Let us dip our brushes into bold colours of paint and confidence and let us all attack our walls with murals, posters, writings, cartoons, all soaked in the conscious language of revolution. We must restore dignity to the visual arts. The writing is on the wall.

The thoughts in this paper are hurried. The situation that besets my country may deem this the green idealism of a slave. But to reach out to grasp this vision is our task and our joy, both as cultural workers and as members of our communities. "Forward with the creation of a new calibre of cultural workers." This was the call made at the gathering on Art Towards Social Development and Culture and Resistance in Botswana in 1982. And in the land where the people have become actively critical of their enemies, like the Vaal, Soweto, Katlehong, Tembisa, Grahamstown, the demands made upon us as cultural workers cannot be more clear. Our people have taken to the streets in the greatest possible expression of hope and anger, of conscious understanding and wholesale commitment: We as cultural workers must join with all our talents and skills in this expression.

Reviews

Images of a Revolution

(Mural Art in Mozambique)

by Albie Sachs — published by Zimbabwe Publishing House

It has long been part of the perennial culture of Southern Africa for people to paint pictures on the walls of their homes. And again, historically, the paintings on the walls and floors in the rural areas were never simply pretty patterns for the people living in those areas. The patterns were infused with meaning. They symbolised the universe in which a peasant family grows and farms and dies. But our people have been forced off the land, forced to live in matchboxes they could not own, or tin roofs patched with cardboard and plastic; forced to work in factories they cannot control, doing alienating and mind-dulling work. They are permitted to gaze at the ominous and dominating marble facades of the oppressive state. We do not own the walls around us; hence the need for painting on the walls has left us, is leaving us.

But in Mozambique in 1975 the people took back control over their destiny. They took back the walls. And they covered these walls with the expression and understanding of their struggle; first with spontaneous slogans and symbols, later with more formal murals. A new art was born.

This birth is the subject of the book, *Images of a Revolution*. The book begins:

“Revolution is a highly conscious act. It permits the unthinkable to be thought, the inconceivable to be imagined, and the unspoken to be shouted out loud. When Independence came to Mozambique in 1975, people celebrated not only the end of centuries of portuguese colonialism, but also the unfolding of a deep process of internal transformation, the sudden flowering in bright sunlight of all that had been hidden in darkness and fear.”

Images makes a first attempt to describe and explain the development of mural art within the context of the Mozambican revolution. In doing so, it puts all our graphic work in a new perspective. It forces us to look again at the pressures acting upon our art, to think where we may begin to go in future. Find a copy and read it, look at it. This is a new road in front of us, stretching to the ends of our imaginations, and beyond.

But having said that, we must ask: what are the lessons we can learn from this book? What does the graphic work from Maputo teach us? How well does it succeed?

The overwhelming lesson of *Images* is the intimate link, indeed the harmony, between cultural work and the liberation of the people. “Opening the doors of culture” is not a sweet liberal sentiment. It is a matter of hard material fact and concrete political direction.

To paint murals on the walls you must first take over the walls. And you must have paint.

Images points out that the first wave of Mozambican wall-painting subsided with the growing paint shortage. Again, tragically, the beautiful revolutionary posters of the late 1970s in Mozambique have had to be curtailed because there is no paper to print them on. This sad fact alone shows that art is not separate from political and economic reality. But the second fact in the development of Mozambican art lies in the sponsorship. The murals were intended from their earliest conception to have an audience of the whole community, “the people”. They were commissioned by the people’s republic. They were painted in public places, on the walls of the people’s state. They were not hidden in galleries or museums or sold to the private collections of the rich, or an alien audience far away.

Working from this premise (at the time when they had paint) cultural workers in Mozambique began to develop new symbols and imagery to express the richness of their revolutionary experience. In our unliberated societies, we are taught that art can only explore our private perceptions; and that we will succeed as artists only if we can present such perceptions in an individualistic manner differing from every other human being around us. But in *Images* we find the graphic artist struggling to express the deep knowledge of history, the conscious awareness, that has overcome the people of Mozambique. The picture drawn on the walls epitomises all that every Mozambican has seen and known; they are soaked with the reality which cultural workers and people there share together.

“New images and symbols appear everywhere, soldiers with rifles over their shoulders returning home, mission completed, workers in town and country, formerly seen as sources of cheap anonymous labour, as ‘natives’ now portrayed as producers of the nation’s wealth”.

The cultural worker can again turn to the roots of his experience, to his people, to his community; the stream from which art feeds and is nourished.

This new understanding not only inspired the creation of new symbols; it gave birth to new styles. Particularly here we would like to emphasise the role of the narrative in the murals. The visual arts encouraged by the Western world concentrate on taking instants of seeing out of time, snapshots with meaning only in terms of the artist’s private way of interpreting colour or form. The murals that have begun to develop on the streets of Maputo, on the contrary, show us the image and the symbol as part of the process of the community’s day to day activities. In the Hero’s Circle mural, for instance, one image led to another until victory, the establishment of people’s power. Again, our culture has long acknowledged the indispensibility of the story line as a vehicle for understanding. The narrative element manifests itself strongly in language and song. Therefore welcoming the narrative once more into the graphic arts opens many new possibilities.



A MOZAMBICAN MURAL

As a part of the struggle to find new meaning, cultural workers must also look for new ways of working together. This implies finding a new manner of living together as a people. The murals of Maputo were painted mostly by mural collectives. The contents were discussed collectively. They were painted often by groups of people who did not consider themselves artists, working under the supervision of a more experienced cultural worker. One point of interest is that as the murals become more formal commissioned works, an experienced graphic artist tended to take responsibility for ensuring a consistent style throughout the mural.

The text of *Images* tells us in detail how the conceptions, styles and methods of Mozambican mural art were worked out, showing clearly how the direction of the people's struggle determined and infused the development of the revolutionary graphic. But *Images* breaks new ground, and in doing so unfortunately stumbles in places. In saying this we do not intend to condemn the book, for it is a starting point, it is all we have from amongst us. Merely we look to future direction. In saying this again we can say that the Southern African artists have found a new weapon. Like the Angolan novel, *Mayombe*, like the much-needed rain, *Images* is here with us.

But we wish in particular to question how the book handles the visuals. As we said, as the text demonstrates, the mural art of Maputo is narrative, burdened with a consciousness of the process of struggle. Yet the photos in the book tend to take symbols and images out of context, to amputate one limb here or one portrait from the body of the whole mural. For example, the Hero's Circle mural is presented in a series of disjointed images, of detainees, of Machel, of victory, and only a very small reproduction of the postage stamp series based on the mural gives us some indication of how these images are linked. Separately the pictures are interesting paintings. But only in their inter-relationship do we see their significance as a cultural statement.

And again, only two pictures (the Museum mural and the Ministry of Agriculture mural, both shown with plants in front of them) even begin to show the environment of the murals, that this is public, monumental art, open to all. Surely we might benefit from seeing visually the relationship of the image to the community.

Further (and again in the context that the book is a starting point for the new art): we question that the presentation seems to accept all styles and content without distinction, as

Short Story

BEFORE THE FAMILY FOREGATHERING

Cosmo Pieterse



Pen and ink drawing by MILES PELO

Already two weeks and still Malay Camp had not quite felt like home. Strange how one gets used to the rail road running mile after mile ahead of one, how one comes to associate this station with this sound, that tang, that smell, that touch of the air on your skin.

"Johnny, when are you going?" His mother's voice reached him from it seemed miles away and yet he felt that, despite the distance, he had to reply as if she were only a few feet from him.

"In good time, Mum."

"Didn't you hear me, Johnny. There's a train coming in. Go and meet your Aunt, it must be her."

"It is the Blue Train, Mummy, and Angelina certainly can't travel on it, even you should know that. The Orange Express may have a second class compartment, but the Blue Train is certainly 'White Only'."

"What is that, my child?"

"I said it is the Blue Train, mother, the Blue Train. Aunt Angelina cannot be on it." This time he shouted back in reply.

"How do you know?"

"It is three o'clock, Ma, and I haven't been a bedding boy for the last five years every Christmas holiday without getting to know the times of the

trains." He looked across from Malay Camp to the main station. That's all De Aar really is, he thought, just a big station.

De Aar - as the geography books would have it - an important junction lying in the heart of the great Karoo, linking the barren western coast of Namibia, the fertile South-Western Cape Peninsula and the hinterland of the entire South Africa with each other. Especially everywhere in racist South Africa with the Mother City.

Cape Town: mother of pity ...

"I say, Madam, I say, Madam, it is right here, Madam, luscious peaches, lovely guavas, ohenimuri apples, hey, moenie loer nie; if you peep you will weep; these are onions for bunions, golden delicious, sweet and here, lady, they're vicious!"

The eternal bustle of the Grand Parade on a Saturday. Here the stacks of merchandise, there are shelves upon shelves of books, brand new, second hand, paperbacks, comics, hardbacks, encyclopaedias - the lot; and in one corner the Salvation Army preacher, in another the politician inveigling against all and sundry, especially the governmental sundry up the Avenue which, according to the speaker, was up the wall, in the doldrums, in a mess and minding everybody's business - all in vain.

He remembered the first impact that this Grand Parade had had on him - oh, what was it, about five years ago now. He remembered still the vividness of his impression every week when he crossed the Parade on his way to the training college; how he would stop to check on the latest acquisitions of second hand books that the corner stall always had in abundant supply. But most of all, the sounds of voices on the Parade, down Lower Adderley Street, up Hanover Street.

"I say, ou Charlie man, did you see what is playing in the bioscope now?"

"No, man, but ou George saw it mos last night. He tells me it is a very good double future. The one piece is called The Hunchback of Not a Damn - it shows.... Oh, man, you know mos what a hunchback is. So the title of the stukkie tells you mos what it is about, of course it is about a hunchback but I don't know why it is called Not a Damn. Possibly he didn't care a damn whether he was a hunchback or not. But ou Charlie also say it is a good stukkie. I forget now what they call the other one, but it is a double future. The other isn't a drama; I think it is a cowboy piece, and then there is also the comic cuts and the serious. You know mos the serious is the Mark of Zorro, Episode II."

You walk up Hanover Street and you cannot help but admire and envy the skill of the young chaps who jump onto a speeding double-decker bus. They hold onto the handrail, swing around it as if it were a greased pole and they trained acrobats. Then they stand facing in the direction from which they came, and jump off the bus, which is still going at full speed. And in the meantime you continue your journey past Seven Steps - the seven steps to heaven in somebody's wall - inscribed de-

scription. A series of broken and breaking stone steps leading to the heart of District Six delapidation...

Seven Steps to heaven - the only kind of wall slogan allowed these days, and at the top of the seven steps a kind of heaven does await you. Someone with a *dagga-pilletjie*. (Kiss me, Marie Johanna) The second draw or third on the little rolled cigarette and probably the hungry, frustrated young *skollie* (*Weg wereld* - a whiff and a sniff and one gone is the world that call me a won't-work hooligan) who was climbing up the seven steps feels that he is seven steps further from the squalor of his own District Six. (Sweet sleep in the dreamy arms of Maria Juana ...)

One night and in the darkness of an alley-way in District Six a voice out of the deeper darkness of a doorway that was also a passage that was also a hallway and bedroom for five decrepit bodies:

"Hey, Lange!" Was it Lange they were shouting, tall one, meaning him and referring to his 6' 2" or ...

"Hey, Lange," a second voice insisted out of the doorway, "can't you hear we're calling you?" Were they saying Langa, which means the sun (and is the name of one of Cape Town's locations, the transit camps for African labour); referring to his dark complexion...

"Hey!"

"Me?"

"Yes you, give us half-a-crown, man. I mean, give us fifty cents or can you make it a round rand?"

"Sorry, palley, I haven't got any money, man. I am only just a student, you see."

"You a student? You are as big as a giant! *Voetsek*, what do you take me for? Do you think I'm wet behind the ears? Do you think I am a student? and here I am smaller than you? No man. Student, you a student, cor, g'wan, you're no scholar, you're a skollie. Just like me except you're a respectable skollie."

"I am sorry I have got no money."

"Give us a smoke then."

"Don't smoke."

And then he had started running because they had advanced menacingly out of the darkness: he had run pell-mell down the darkness of an unknown street and had heard them shouting after him. "Langa, go back to Langa: Langa, back to Langa!"

Langa, the sun. Langa - the township which for all its bleakness of aspect meant jazz, jazz such as you could only hear from the agony of enforced bachelordom, the uncertainty of whether a liquor raid would happen and the difficulty of knowing whether your pass would be removed tomorrow. Langa, the sun. He had not of course gone to Langa but to Athlone where he boarded, to Bonteheuwel, which some witty inhabitant had rechristened Beverly Hills. At least the hills part was a correct translation. The Beverly certainly was no description to fit the grey drab sameness of the

Pen and ink drawing by MILES PELO



houses which pained the sight as one looked down the dull monotony of Fuschia Lane, Acacia Avenue, Oak Road or Geranium Street. Bonteheuwel: flat expanse of uniformity to accomodate a name which meant variegated hill; to accomodate the unpredictable and unclassified and almost indescribable mixture that went by the name of "Cape Coloured".

Johnny, there is another train coming".
 "That's the mail from Joburg, Ma. Aunt Angelina couldn't possibly be on that; after all, Victoria

West is not..."
 "Johnny, my child, don't you start argumentifying with me. Where did you pick up these bad manners? Since when do you want to teach your mother? I gave birth to you, my child. The good Lord knows that I brought you up properly. I don't want you to let me down before the whole family. These city ways that you picked up in Cape Town, get rid of them, my child. It's all these politics that they teach you there in that school instead of teaching you how to teach the children good man-

ners and obedience to the government and faith in the Lord and obeying the laws of the country and of God, and this bedding boy business of yours hasn't done you any good either. Shame on you, my child. Here I brought you up respectable; I sacrifice, my child, to make you a teacher, day after day, my child, on my knees I scrubbed the floors of the rich people to get enough money to buy you books and what do I get? My child who is a teacher demeans himself to become a bedding boy and he goes to Joburg and what does he do there! I'm sure he mixes with *tsotsis* and the shebeen queens and the law breakers. Remember who you are! Johnny Olifant, a respectable coloured teacher..."

Had their family name somewhere in the past been Ndlovu? Then...

How right she was in a way. In Johannesburg, during the one weekend that he was off duty when his train had gone further north, he had certainly not mixed with respectable Cape Coloured folk but with...

"Kaffer, waar's jou pas?" They had all frozen, dumb. "Ou Jan, jong, kom kyk hier. I've caught a whole gang."

The policeman's torch had flung an imprisonment circle around them and had illuminated his grinning face momentarily as he swung the torch towards his advancing mate; the latter was striding out with a wide grin, one hand clasping the bottle of Pepsi-Cola that he had just taken from the Indian cafe, the other on the butt of his revolver.

"They still got the swag, you know." And then pointing at Jonas Radebe he had indicated his music bag. "What is in there, Kaffer? Don't you speak a civilised language?"

Jonas was quiet. "I say, what is in there?" Jonas—quiet still, had started biting his lower lip until out of the blue Siphos had intervened.

"No, he is raw, my boss, he doesn't understand. We have got night passes my boss, you see we're musicians. In that bag he has got his sax."

The policeman guffawed. "What, my God, he carries his sex in the bag, let him take it out, let me see his sex."

"Yes, my boss," and turning to Jo, Siphos warned him in location slang not to be silly. "Space jou ntloko, 'n man se bra. Dis 'n square laanietjie, lomfana. So, cucumber, my man. Dis hy die, ser-sant." He slowly, as he spoke, brought out his instrument.

I had joined the fellows when they had gone to a blow in the Bantu Men's Social Centre; one thing had led to another. Jam after jam. Everybody had enjoyed it all and so of course here we were at 2 o'clock in the morning without night passes in the area where we shouldn't be. Siphos was right and Jo obliged.

"Oh I see," said the policeman, "you see Jan-nie, he has got a big sex, eh? But I understand now how you people make music, don't you? Right, then blow, blow, man."

The first few notes were off key.

"Where are your other instruments? Why do you blow so hard man?" Hastily each of the other chaps had produced trumpets, a clarinet, and even the percussions had to be unpacked. "And where is yours, then?" and he pointed towards me.

I was about to explain that I was a bedding boy and that I had only accompanied the musicians, but Themba had thought much faster than I, and was ready with the information that I was....

"The lead singer, my basie, that's what he is, that's why he hasn't got an instrument. He does the singing and dancing for our group." And Themba's grin was the widest whitest spread that you could imagine ingratiating itself on anybody. And I had been obliged to sing and dance in the middle of Eloff Street. The dark but very respectable blocks of offices must have been amazed to see the natural rhythm and sense of movement of the native developed so inelegantly that night on the warm macadamised surface of the brightly lit, forsaken thoroughfare. I do not know to this day whether the policeman's laughter, uncontrolled gust after gust of belly laughter, was caused by my doing the *khwela* and the *phatha-phatha* solo and with such lack of subtlety in my own style, making up pseudo-suggestive gestures what was lacking in choreography, or by the completely unmusical croaking that passes for my singing voice, or by his sense of having achieved his objective, but he laughed, and laughed. Long and uncontrollably.

"And I thought this was a gang, what a band you chaps are. Now see that you don't walk about in the streets again this time of the night, you might get into trouble, you know. Thank your lucky stars that there are still police around to protect you. Now go. Laat vat, bliksems!"

And we let ourselves take the road like lightning, like trained athletes, like greased lightning in a big hurry to earth itself at home.

Now, the Olifant home would soon have its contingent of Christmas foregatherers here in De Aar for the last time, for granny was now oorle Ouma, late gran, and with her death the annual focus of the scattered Olifant clan was gone.

"Johnny!"

"Yes, Ma, I can hear it. It is Aunt Angelina's train. I'm going."

GLOSSARY

hey, moenie loer nie = don't peep; stukkie = piece; dagga-pilletjie = a joint of marijuana; skollie = thug; voetsek = (vulgar) go away, used to admonish dogs; Space jou ntloko, 'n man se bra. Dis a square laanietjie lomfana, so, cucumber, my man. Dis hy dieser-sant. (Get your act together my brother, this white boy is a square, so play it cool.



shootings to the
cowardly shootings
of Soweto
so as to
future actions
of the people
sharply
organise
Let's look back
yes
without negligence
any negligence
to our past
cultural life
so as to
cultural actions
of today
and of the morrow
more finely do
Let's grab it
the spear
and
with vigour
pierce apartheid
to its final end.

KMS

Briefs

1. **Caiphus Semanya** and **Letta Mbulu** were in Lusaka to give a benefit concert on August 23rd and 24th in celebration of the 10th Anniversary of the United Nations Institute for Namibia.
2. England had never seen anything like it. Over 100,000 protesters marched in the blistering sun of the hottest June in 10 years, from London's Hyde Park to Clapham Common. There they gathered in the largest ever anti-apartheid rally to listen to an all-day-long concert. Under a massive banner saying 'No to Apartheid' top artists, such as **Hugh Masekela, Sting, Sade** and **Peter Gabriel** sang free of charge. ANC officials held aloft our banner and the thousands stomped and clapped and cheered.
3. As 'Bulldog' Margaret Thatcher continues to resist sanctions, British artists are letting their voices be heard. The **British Artists Against Apartheid Movement**, launched on April 15th in solidarity with the US based **Artists United Against Apartheid**, now have well over 100 signatories. They have already embarked upon street concerts and plan a benefit record and a number of large concerts as well as a re-recording of 'Free Nelson Mandela' with a new version featuring some of the artists and musicians who have signed up. 'We aim to increase British public awareness as to the nature of apartheid', they state and plan through cultural means to support the cause of a 'free, non-racial and democratic South Africa.'
4. *A Changing South Africa* — an exhibition of news, photographs and cartoons from the *Weekly Mail* ended on June 27th. The exhibition was staged to celebrate the June 14th birthday of the *Weekly Mail* and also marked the day SADF squads attacked and killed ANC supporters and Batswana, in Gaborone a year ago.
5. A photograph in a recent issue of *Paratus* shows musician **David Kramer** with a 'Bushman soccer team from 201 Battalion'. We hope

Mr Kramer is not intending to make a habit of lending himself to such blatant SADF propaganda pitches which would surely prejudice his once trenchant, lately limper satire. We hear '*Baboon-dogs*' marks a return to the social concern of the much younger, fresh from Worcester, Kramer; however *RIXAKA* did not receive a review copy.

6. Again in *Paratus*, this time **Pierre de Charnoy** gives the pro-SADF soliloquy. We hear him waxing nostalgic for the creative times on 'the Border'. *RIXAKA* hopes that democratic cultural workers of all kinds will take appropriate steps to isolate this gentleman.
7. Against vehement opposition from monopolistic distributors, Ster Kinekor and UIP, this year's **film festivals** in Durban and Cape Town made an effort to be relevant to South African audiences by screening a number of South African films. After appeals, bans were lifted on 3 documentaries — '*I Talk About Me — I Am Africa*', '*Last Grave at Dimbaza*' and '*No Middle Road To Freedom*' — but for one screening only, leaving only **Ken Kaplan's** drama '*The Hidden Farm*' to be banned outright. Speaking at the screenings, he said: 'There can be no freedom of any kind in SA while censorship exists as it does. The only option left to film-makers in SA is to make films which do not show a little and ignore a lot in the hope of not being banned.' Years of being banned had unfortunately eroded much of the initial impact of films such as '*You Have Struck A Rock*' (1981), '*South Africa Belongs To Us*' (1980) and '*Last Grave At Dimbaza*' (1974). Johannesburg was notable in that it did not screen one South African made film; coupled with inaccessible venues and over-priced tickets it is patently obvious that it has become a self indulgent escape for the White liberal establishment, ignoring the role it should be playing in the development of SA cinema by screening films made by South Africans for the majority of South Africans.
8. In the wake of the success of '**Rock Against Apartheid**' five of the artists and its main organiser **Tommy Rander** visited in March the ANC Headquarters in Zambia, SOMAFSCO and the offices in Tan-

zania as well as Zimbabwe to discuss further support to the ANC. A TV Video was made of their visit which was shown all over the Scandinavian countries.

9. On the weekend of June 6th in Copenhagen more than 16,000 fans rocked **Against Apartheid** in an impressive show of solidarity with the ANC. All top Danish stars performed alongside the specially invited **Amandla Band**.
10. Among speakers at the **Culture Against Apartheid Seminar** in Dublin, Ireland on the 25th and 26th April was **Robert Arden**, renowned playwright, who explained why he has consistently supported the Cultural Boycott.
11. During the week of 11th — 17th April famed African writers met at the **2nd African Writers Conference** in Stockholm, culminating in a public discussion on '*What is the Role of the Writer in National and Cultural Liberation*'. Topics including the Women's Role, Protest, Neo-Colonialism and Nation-building in Africa were discussed by such writers as **Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Wole Soyinka, Ama Ata Aidoo, Eldred Jones** and **Emmanuel Ngara**. With participation of **Mongane Serote, Njabulo Ndebele, Siphos Sepamla** and **Miriam Tlali** there was considerable focus on South Africa.
12. **AMANDLA TOURS CANADA AND ITALY**
ANC's Cultural Ensemble, Amandla, participated at the **Toronto Arts Against Apartheid Festival (TAAAF)**. Other participants were **Caiphus Semanya, Letta Mbulu, Harry Belafonte**, Nigerian singer **Sonny Okosun**, Reggae star **Leroy Sibbles** and many other musical groups. **Amandla's** performances were met with enthusiasm from record crowds. This multicultural extravaganza, according to **TAAAF** organisers has not only succeeded to draw the largest ever crowd in anti-apartheid activities in Canada, but has also 'created a permanent anti-apartheid consciousness amongst Canadians'. The presence of Bishop Desmond Tutu and senior ANC activists at this 8 day cultural feast (from June 1st to 8th) added an impetus to the struggle against apartheid. **Amandla** proceeded (on a freedom train) to Ottawa, performing at the rousing 10th Anniversary of June 16th

organised by Oxfam, Canada. From Ottawa the group flew to Newfoundland and throughout the week were received with tremendous enthusiasm and show of solidarity.

In Italy the **Festival in Solidarity with the Peoples of South Africa, Namibia and Western Sahara** was organised by the Young Communist League and the Italian Communist Party. **Amandla** performed with overwhelming response in Viterbo and Naples, the latter being the main centre of the Festival. The presence of the Secretary General of the ANC, Cde Alfred Nzo, other distinguished guests and members of the Italian Communist Party highlighted the importance of the Festival.

13. The first of a series of jazz shows featuring top South African musicians, opened on May 25th, 1986 at the Diepkloof Funda Centre. The show and subsequent others has given a resounding welcome to a reawakening of our jazz scene. Other big names featured at these shows included **Mankunku Ngozi, Duke Makasi, Tete Mbambisa, Victor Ntoni, Lulu Gontsana, Barney Rachabane, and Count Judge.**

14. **Steve Kekana, Abigail Kubeka and Blondie Makhene** came out with some absolutely ridiculous justifications for participating in the South African Bureau for Information's *'Song For Peace'* in the beginning of September. These three puppets along with the other sell-outs in the cast have accepted blood money at R8,000 per day for the 10 front singers and R4,000 per day for the 40 chorus singers. In justifying their participation Kekana argues that:
- a) this was the first big chance for musicians to promote racial conciliation and
 - b) that he prefers money being spent on 'Peace' than on rubber bullets and teargas canisters.
- Conveniently with R8,000 per day in his pocket Kekana heartfeltdly says that he would not forgive himself if he did not try every avenue to bring peace to South Africa. **RIXAKA** joins the people's voice in protest at this blatant betrayal and paper thin justification of these collaborators. Mr Kekana the people will not forgive you. We will allow you no peaceful avenue in SA where you and your kind can spend your blood money.

15. Calling SA an 'uncivilised nation', American singer **Harry Belafonte** has warned that there will be a bloodbath in Africa if apartheid is not abandoned. Ending a visit during which he held talks with the ANC and President Kaunda, Mr Belafonte said there was the risk that violence in SA would spill over into the Front Line States 'killing millions of people'. He said he had found support in Zambia for a \$15 million six hour film on SA. The film would be shot in Zambia and Zimbabwe and would feature prominent anti-apartheid campaigners such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu and President Kaunda.

16. **HAMBA KAHLE BESSIE HEAD** On April 17th, **Bessie (Emery) Head** died of hepatitis in Botswana. She was 48 years old. Bessie was an untiring writer who captured those realities of life which often passed others by. In looking at her own life one can easily see how she could write as she did. She wrote from deep experience, using her talent and observing those around her in that

way which only the rough side of life can teach one to do. Bessie was born in a mental asylum to which her mother was committed and where her mother died. She was brought up in a mission orphanage and went on to become a teacher. Later she joined DRUM and worked as a journalist. Since 1964 she was exiled in Botswana, a country she loved dearly. In 1969 she wrote her first novel, *'When Rain Clouds Gather'*. Since then she has produced *'Maru'* (1971), *'A Question Of Power'* (1974), *'The Collectors Of Treasures'* (1977), *'Serowe Village Of The Rainwind'* (1981) and *'A Bewitched Crossroads: An African Saga'* (1984). At the time of her death she was researching into the Bama Ngwato archives in Gaborone and she was also working on her autobiography. **RIXAKA** salutes the passing of Bessie Head and will feature a more extensive article on her life and work in a future issue. **Hamba Kahle daughter of Pietermaritzburg, daughter of Botswana.**



FOR MM

Can we remember him perhaps
and dare to conjure his image
in our minds? Thinking let us
think and lift our hands and
grasp in him the carved statue
of strength he created and left
in our hearts

Can we remember him perhaps
as he spoke words flowing
like rivers of his childhood
in a blasphemed country of wide
lakes and yellow dongas and green
sedge which clung to the spokes
of Thornville wagons drawn by
patient donkeys that clopped on
the parched ground that we will
claim
are now claiming with weapons
and
words that kill

Can we remember him perhaps
when we smiled at his hoary frost
and the moustache he sometimes
nibbled
spitting out imaginary bits of
tobacco

Can we remember him perhaps
as a worker a soldier a Communist
a transcender of all things that
cause men to scratch their heads
at night

Can we remember him perhaps
as things are happening
as things are happening
now
as his giant fingers are clenching
into this fist that is hammering
the edifices of injustice

Can we remember him perhaps
Moses Mabhida man soldier
fighter moulder creator
father brother comrade-in-arms
lover
Communist

Can we remember him perhaps
AND DO SOMETHING!

JAKE SHANGE

